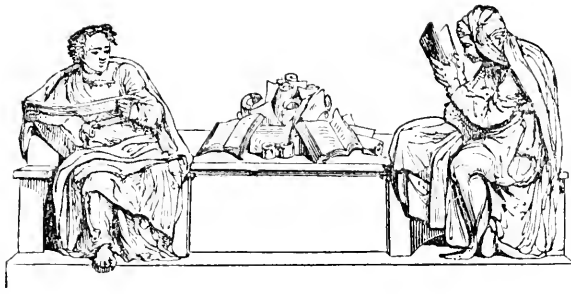


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CAMPBELL'S

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## ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

By W. H. CAMPBELL.  
No. I.

A SCAMPER IN THE PRAIRIE OF JACINTO.

READER! Were you ever in a Texan prairie? Probably not. *I* have been; and this was how it happened. When a very young man, I found myself one fine morning possessor of a Texas land-scrip—that is to say, a certificate of the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, in which it was stated, that, in consideration of the sum of one thousand dollars, duly paid and delivered by Mr. Edward Rivers into the hands of the cashier of the aforesaid company, he, the said Edward Rivers, was become entitled to ten thousand acres of Texan land, to be selected by himself, or those he should appoint, under the sole condition of not infringing on the property or rights of the holders of previously given certificates.

Ten thousand acres of the finest land in the world, and under a heaven compared to which, our Maryland sky, bright as it is, appears dull and foggy! It was a tempting bait—too good a one not to be caught at by many in those times of speculation; and accordingly, our free and enlightened citizens bought and sold their millions of Texan acres just as readily as they did their thousands of towns and villages in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, and their tens of thousands of shares in banks and railways. It was a speculative fever, which has since, we may hope, been in some degree, cured. At any rate,

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the remedies applied have been tolerably severe.

I had not escaped the contagion, and, having got the land on paper, I thought I should like to see it in dirty acres; so, in company with a friend who had a similar venture, I embarked at Baltimore on board the *Catcher* schooner, and, after a three weeks' voyage, arrived in Galveston Bay.

The grassy shores of this bay, into which the river Brazos empties itself, rise so little above the surface of the water, to which they bear a strong resemblance in colour, that it would be difficult to discover them, were it not for three stunted trees growing on the western extremity of a long lizard-shaped island that stretches nearly sixty miles across the bay, and conceals the mouth of the river. These trees are the only landmark for the mariner; and, with their exception, not a single object—not a hill, a house, nor so much as a bush, relieves the level sameness of the island and adjacent continent.

After we had, with some difficulty, got on the inner side of the island, a pilot came on board and took charge of the vessel. The first thing he did was to run us on a sandbank, off which we got with no small labour, and by the united exertions of sailors and passengers, at length entered the river. In our impatience to land, I and my friend left the schooner in a cockleshell of a boat, which upset in the surge, and we found ourselves floundering in the water. Luckily it was not very deep, and we escaped with a thorough drenching.

When we had scrambled on shore, we gazed about us for some time before we could persuade ourselves that we were actually upon land. It was, without exception, the strangest coast we had ever seen, and there was scarcely a possibility of distinguishing the boundary between earth and water. The green grass grew down to the edge of the green sea, and there was only the streak of white foam left by the latter upon the former to serve as a line of demarcation. Before us was a plain, a hundred or more miles in extent, covered with long, fine grass, rolling in waves before each puff of the sea-breeze, with neither tree, nor house, nor hill, to vary the monotony of the surface. Ten or twelve miles toward the north and north-west, we distinguished some dark masses, which we afterward discovered to be groups of trees; but to our eyes they looked exactly like islands in a green sea, and we subsequently learned that they were called islands by the people of the country. It would have been difficult to have given them a more appropriate name, or one better describing their appearance.

Proceeding along the shore, we came to a block-house situated behind a small tongue of land projecting into the river, and decorated with the flag of the Mexican republic, waving in all its glory from the roof. At that period, this was the only building of which Galveston harbour could boast. It served as custom-house and as barracks for the garrison, also as the residence of the director of customs, and of the civil and military intendant, as head quarters of the officer commanding, and, moreover, as hotel and wine and spirit store. Alongside the board, on which was depicted a sort of hieroglyphic, intended for the Mexican eagle, hung a bottle doing duty as a sign, and the republican banner threw its protecting shadow over an announcement of "Brandy, Whiskey, and Accommodation for Man and Beast."

As we approached the house, we saw the whole garrison assembled before the door. It consisted of a dozen dwarfish, spindle-shanked Mexican soldiers, none of them so big or half so strong as American boys of fifteen, and whom I would have backed a single Kentucky woodsman, armed with a riding-whip, to have driven to the four winds of heaven. These heroes all sported tremendous beards, whiskers, and mustaches, and had a habit of knitting their brows, in the endeavour, as we supposed, to look fierce and formidable. They were crowding round a

table of rough planks, and playing a game of cards, in which they were so deeply engrossed that they took no notice of our approach. Their officer, however, came out of the house to meet us.

Captain Cotton, formerly editor of the *Mexican Gazette*, now civil and military commandant at Galveston, custom-house director, harbour-master, and tavern-keeper, and a Yankee to boot, seemed to trouble himself very little about his various dignities and titles. He produced some capital French and Spanish wine, which, it is to be presumed, he got duty free, and welcomed us to Texas. We were presently joined by some of our fellow-passengers, who seemed as bewildered as we had been at the billiard-table appearance of the country. Indeed, the place looked so desolate and uninviting, that there was little inducement to remain on *terra firma*; and it was with a feeling of relief that we once more found ourselves on board the schooner.

We took three days to sail up the river Brazos to the town of Brazoria, a distance of thirty miles. On the first day, nothing but meadow-land was visible on either side of us; but, on the second, the monotonous grass-covered surface was varied by islands of trees, and, about twenty miles from the mouth of the river, we passed through a forest of sycamores, and saw several herds of deer and flocks of wild turkeys. At length we reached Brazoria, which, at the time I speak of, namely, in the year 1832, was an important city—for Texas, that is to say—consisting of upward of thirty houses, three of which were of brick, three of planks, and the remainder of logs. All the inhabitants were Americans, and the streets arranged in American fashion, in straight lines and at right angles. The only objection to the place was, that in the wet season it was all under water; but the Brazorians overlooked this little inconvenience, in consideration of the inexhaustible fruitfulness of the soil. It was the beginning of March when we arrived, and yet there was already an abundance of new potatoes, beans, peas, and artichokes, all of the finest sorts and most delicate flavour.

At Brazoria, my friend and myself had the satisfaction of learning that our land-certificates, for which we had each paid a thousand dollars, were worth exactly nothing—just so much waste paper, in short—unless we chose to conform to a condition to which

our worthy friends, the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, had never made the smallest allusion.

It appeared, that in the year 1824, the Mexican Congress had passed an act for the encouragement of emigration from the United States to Texas. In consequence of this act, an agreement was entered into with contractors, or *empresarios*, as they call them in Mexico, who had bound themselves to bring a certain number of settlers into Texas within a given time, and without any expense to the Mexican government. On the other hand, the Mexican government had engaged to furnish land to these emigrants at the rate of five square leagues to every hundred families; but to this agreement one condition was attached, and it was, that all settlers should be, or become, Roman Catholics. Failing this, the validity of their claims to the land was not recognised, and they were liable to be turned out any day at the point of the bayonet.

This information threw us into no small perplexity. It was clear that we had been duped, completely bubbled, by the rascally Land Company; that, as heretics, the Mexican government would have nothing to say to us; and that, unless we chose to become converts to the Romish Church, we might whistle for our acres, and light our pipes with the certificate. Our Yankee friends at Brazoria, however, laughed at our dilemma, and told us that we were only in the same plight as hundreds of our countrymen, who had come to Texas in total ignorance of this condition, but who had not the less taken possession of their land and settled there; that they themselves were among the number, and that, although it was just as likely they would turn negroes as Roman Catholics, they had no idea of being turned out of their houses and plantations; that, at any rate, if the Mexicans tried it, they had their rifles with them, and should be apt, they reckoned, to burn powder before they allowed themselves to be kicked off such an almighty fine piece of soil. So, after a while, we began to think, that as we had paid our money and come so far, we might do as others had done before us—occupy our land and wait the course of events. The next day we each bought a horse, or *mustang*, as they call them there, which animals were selling at Brazoria for next to nothing, and rode out into the prairie to look for a convenient spot to settle.

These mustangs are small horses, rarely

above fourteen hands high, and are descended from the Spanish breed introduced by the original conquerors of the country. During the three centuries that have elapsed since the conquest of Mexico, they have increased and multiplied to an extraordinary extent, and are to be found in vast droves in the Texan prairies, although they are now beginning to become somewhat scarcer. They are taken with the *lasso*, concerning which instrument or weapon I will here say a word or two, notwithstanding that it has often been described.

The lasso is usually from twenty to thirty feet long, very flexible, and composed of strips of twisted ox-hide. One end is fastened to the saddle, and the other, which forms a running noose, held in the hand of the hunter, who, thus equipped, rides out into the prairie. When he discovers a troop of wild horses, he manœuvres to get to windward of them, and then to approach as near them as possible. If he is an experienced hand, the horses seldom or never escape him, and as soon as he finds himself within twenty or thirty feet of them, he throws the noose with unerring aim over the neck of the one he has selected for his prey. This done, he turns his own horse short round, gives him the spur, and gallops away, dragging his unfortunate captive after him, breathless, and with his windpipe so compressed by the noose, that he is unable to make the smallest resistance, and after a few yards, falls headlong to the ground, and lies motionless and almost lifeless, sometimes indeed badly hurt and disabled. From this day forward, the horse which has thus been caught never forgets the lasso; the mere sight of it makes him tremble in every limb; and, however wild he may be, it is sufficient to show it to him, or lay it on his neck, to render him as tame and docile as a lamb.

The horse taken, next comes the breaking in, which is effected in a no less brutal manner than his capture. The eyes of the unfortunate animal are covered with a bandage, and a tremendous bit, a pound weight or more, clapped into his mouth; the horse-breaker puts on a pair of spurs six inches long, and with rowels like penknives, and jumping on his back, urges him to his very utmost speed. If the horse tries to rear, or turns restive, one pull, and not a very hard one either, at the instrument of torture they call a bit, is sufficient to tear his mouth to shreds, and cause the blood to flow in streams.

I have myself seen horses' teeth broken with these barbarous bits. The poor beast whinnies and groans with pain and terror; but there is no help for him, the spurs are at his flanks, and on he goes full gallop, till he is ready to sink from fatigue and exhaustion. He then has a quarter of an hour's rest allowed him; but scarcely does he begin to recover breath, which has been ridden or spurred out of his body, when he is again mounted, and has to go through the same violent process as before. If he breaks down during this rude trial, he is either knocked on the head or driven away as useless; but if he holds out, he is marked with a hot iron, and left to graze on the prairie. Henceforward, there is no particular difficulty in catching him when wanted; the wildness of the horse is completely punished out of him, but for it is substituted the most confirmed vice and malice that it is possible to conceive. These mustangs are unquestionably the most deceitful and spiteful of all the equine race. They seem to be perpetually looking out for an opportunity of playing their master a trick; and, very soon after I got possession of mine, I was nearly paying for him in a way that I had not calculated upon.

We were going to Bolivar, and had to cross the river Brazos. I was the last but one to get into the boat, and was leading my horse carelessly by the bridle. Just as I was about to step in, a sudden jerk, and a cry of "mind your beast!" made me jump on one side; and lucky it was that I did so. My mustang had suddenly sprung back, reared up, and then thrown himself forward upon me with such force and fury, that, as I got out of his way, his fore feet went completely through the bottom of the boat. I never in my life saw an animal in such a paroxysm of rage. He curled up his lips till his whole range of teeth was visible, his eyes literally shot fire, while the foam flew from his mouth, and he gave a wild screaming neigh that had something quite diabolical in its sound. I was standing perfectly thunderstruck at this scene, when one of the party took a lasso and very quietly laid it over the animal's neck. The effect was really magical. With closed mouth, drooping ears, and head low, there stood the mustang, as meek and docile as any old jack-ass. The change was so sudden and comical, that we all burst out laughing; although, when I came to reflect on the danger I had run, it required all my love of horses to prevent me from shooting the brute upon the spot.

Mounted upon this ticklish steed, and in company with my friend, I made various excursions to Bolivar, Marion, Columbia, Anahuac, incipient cities, consisting of from five to twenty houses. We also visited numerous plantations and clearings, to the owners of some of which we were known, or had messages of introduction; but either with or without such recommendations, we always found a hearty welcome and hospitable reception, and it was rare that we were allowed to pay for our entertainment.

We arrived one day at a clearing, which lay a few miles off the way from Harrisburg to San Felipe de Austin, and belonged to a Mr. Neal. He had been three years in the country, occupying himself with the breeding of cattle, which is unquestionably the most agreeable, as well as profitable, occupation that can be followed in Texas. He had between seven and eight hundred head of cattle, and from fifty to sixty horses, all mustangs. His plantation, like nearly all the plantations in Texas at that time, was as yet in a very rough state; and his house, although roomy and comfortable enough inside, was built of unhewn tree-trunks, in true backwoodsman style. It was situated on the border of one of the islands, or groups of trees, and stood between two gigantic sycamores, which sheltered it from the sun and wind. In front, and as far as could be seen, lay the prairie, covered with its waving grass and many-coloured flowers; behind the dwelling arose the cluster of forest trees in all their primeval majesty, laced and bound together by an infinity of wild vines, which shot their tendrils and clinging branches hundreds of feet upward to the very top of the trees, embracing and covering the whole island with a green net-work, and converting it into an immense bower of vine leaves, which would have been no unsuitable abode for Bacchus and his train.

These islands are one of the most enchanting features of Texan scenery. Of infinite variety and beauty of form, and unrivalled in the growth and magnitude of the trees that compose them, they are to be found of all shapes—circular, parallelograms, hexagons, octagons—some again twisting and winding like dark-green snakes over the brighter surface of the prairie. In no park or artificially laid-out grounds, would it be possible to find any thing equalling these natural shrubberies in beauty and symmetry. In the morning and evening especially, when surrounded by



a sort of veil of light-grayish mist, and with the horizontal beams of the rising or setting sun gleaming through them, they offer pictures which it is impossible to get weary of admiring.

Mr. Neal was a jovial Kentuckian, and he received us with the greatest hospitality, only asking in return all the news we could give him from the States. It is difficult to imagine, without having witnessed it, the feverish eagerness and curiosity with which all intelligence from their native country is sought after and listened to by these dwellers in the desert. Men, women, and children, crowded round us; and though we had arrived in the afternoon, it was near sunrise before we could escape from the inquiries by which we were overwhelmed, and retire to the beds that had been prepared for us.

I had not slept very long when I was roused by our worthy host. He was going out to catch twenty or thirty oxen, which were wanted for the market at New Orleans. As the kind of chase which takes place after these animals is very interesting, and rarely dangerous, we willingly accepted the invitation to accompany him, and having dressed and breakfasted in all haste, got upon our mustangs and rode off into the prairie.

The party was half a dozen strong, consisting of Mr. Neal, my friend and myself, and three negroes. What we had to do was to drive the cattle, which were grazing on the prairie in herds of from thirty to fifty head, to the house, and then those which were selected for the market were to be taken with the lasso and sent off to Brazoria.

After riding four or five miles, we came in sight of a drove of splendid animals, standing very high, and of most symmetrical form. The horns of these cattle are of unusual length, and, in the distance, have more the appearance of stag's antlers than bull's horns. We approached the herd first to within a quarter of a mile. They remained quite quiet. We rode round them, and in like manner got in rear of a second and third drove, and then began to spread out, so as to form a half circle, and drive the cattle toward the house.

Hitherto my mustang had behaved exceedingly well, cantering freely along, and not attempting to play any tricks. I had scarcely, however, left the remainder of the party a couple of hundred yards, when the devil by which he was possessed began to wake up. The mustangs belonging to the

plantation were grazing some three quarters of a mile off; and no sooner did my beast catch sight of them, than he commenced practising every species of jump and leap that it is possible for a horse to execute, and many of a nature so extraordinary, that I should have thought no brute that ever went on four legs would have been able to accomplish them. He shied, reared, pranced, leaped forward, backward, and sideways; in short, played such infernal pranks, that, although a practised rider, I found it no easy matter to keep my seat. I began heartily to regret that I had brought no lasso with me, which would have tamed him at once, and that, contrary to Mr. Neal's advice, I had put on my American bit instead of a Mexican one. Without these auxiliaries all my horsemanship was useless. The brute galloped like a mad creature some five hundred yards, caring nothing for my efforts to stop him; and then, finding himself close to the troop of mustangs, he stopped suddenly short, threw his head between his forelegs, and his hind feet into the air, with such vicious violence, that I was pitched clean out of the saddle. Before I well knew where I was, I had the satisfaction of seeing him put his fore feet on the bridle, pull bit and bridoon out of his mouth, and then, with a neigh of exultation, spring into the midst of the herd of mustangs.

I got up out of the long grass in a towering passion. One of the negroes who was nearest to me came galloping to my assistance, and begged me to let the beast run for a while, and that when Anthony, the huntsman, came, he would soon catch him. I was too angry to listen to reason, and I ordered him to get off his horse, and let me mount. The black begged and prayed of me not to ride after the brute; and Mr. Neal, who was some distance off, shouted to me, as loud as he could, for heaven's sake, to stop—that I did not know what it was to chase a wild horse in a Texan prairie, and that I must not fancy myself in the meadows of Louisiana or Florida. I paid no attention to all this—I was in too great a rage at the trick the beast had played me, and jumping on the negro's horse, I galloped away like mad.

My rebellious steed was grazing quietly with his companions, and he allowed me to come within a couple of hundred paces of him; but just as I had prepared the lasso, which was fastened to the negro's saddle-bow, he gave a start, and galloped off some

distance further, I after him. Again he made a pause, and munched a mouthful of grass—then off again for another half mile. This time I had great hopes of catching him, for he let me come within a hundred yards; but, just as I was creeping up to him, away he went with one of his shrill neighs. When I galloped fast he went faster, when I rode slowly he slackened his pace. At least ten times did he let me approach him within a couple of hundred yards, without for that being a bit nearer getting hold of him. It was certainly high time to desist from such a mad chase, but I never dreamed of doing so; and indeed the longer it lasted, the more obstinate I got. I rode on after the beast, who kept letting me come nearer and nearer, and then darted off again with his loud-laughing neigh. It was this infernal neigh that made me so savage—there was something so spiteful and triumphant in it, as though the animal knew he was making a fool of me, and exulted in so doing. At last, however, I got so sick of my horse-hunt that I determined to make a last trial, and, if that failed, to turn back. The runaway had stopped near one of the islands of trees, and was grazing quite close to its edge. I thought that if I were to creep round to the other side of the island, and then steal across it, through the trees, I should be able to throw the lasso over his head, or, at any rate, to drive him back to the house. This plan I put in execution—rode round the island, then through it, lasso in hand, and as softly as if I had been riding over eggs. To my consternation, however, on arriving at the edge of trees, and at the exact spot where, only a few minutes before, I had seen the mustang grazing, no signs of him were to be perceived. I made the circuit of the island, but in vain—the animal had disappeared. With a hearty curse, I put spurs to my horse, and started off to ride back to the plantation.

Neither the plantation, the cattle, nor my companions, were visible, it is true; but this gave me no uneasiness. I felt sure that I knew the direction in which I had come, and that the island I had just left was one which was visible from the house, while all around me were such numerous tracks of horses, that the possibility of my having lost my way never occurred to me, and I rode on quite unconcernedly.

After riding for about an hour, however, I began to find the time rather long. I looked at my watch. It was past one o'clock. We

had started at nine, and, allowing an hour and a half to have been spent in finding the cattle, I had passed nearly three hours in my wild and unsuccessful hunt. I began to think that I must have got further from the plantation than I had as yet supposed.

It was toward the end of March, the day clear and warm, just like a May-day in the Southern States. The sun was now shining brightly out, but the early part of the morning had been somewhat foggy; and, as I had only arrived at the plantation the day before, and had passed the whole afternoon and evening indoors, I had no opportunity of getting acquainted with the bearings of the house. This reflection began to make me rather uneasy, particularly when I remembered the entreaties of the negro, and the loud exhortations of Mr. Neal addressed to me as I rode away. I said to myself, however, that I could not be more than ten or fifteen miles from the plantation, that I should soon come in sight of the herds of cattle, and that then there would be no difficulty in finding my way. But when I had ridden another hour without seeing the smallest sign either of man or beast, I got seriously uneasy. In my impatience, I abused poor Neal for not sending somebody to find me. His huntsman, I heard say, was gone to Anahuac, and would not be back for two or three days; but he might have sent a couple of his lazy negroes. Or, if he had only fired a shot or two as a signal. I stopped and listened, in hopes of hearing the crack of a rifle. But the deepest stillness reigned around, scarcely the chirp of a bird was heard—all nature seemed to be taking the siesta. As far as the eye could reach was a waving sea of grass, here and there an island of trees, but not a trace of a human being. At last I thought I had made a discovery. The nearest clump of trees was undoubtedly the same which I had admired and pointed out to my companions soon after we had left the house. It bore a fantastic resemblance to a snake coiled up and about to dart upon its prey. About six or seven miles from the plantation we had passed it on our right hand, and if I now kept it upon my left, I could not fail to be going in a proper direction. So said, so done. I trotted on most perseveringly toward the point of the horizon where I felt certain the house must lie. One hour passed, then a second, then a third; every now and then I stopped and listened, but nothing was audible, not a shot nor a shout. But, although I

heard nothing, I saw something which gave me no great pleasure. In the direction in which we had ridden out, the grass was very abundant and the flowers scarce; whereas the part of the prairie in which I now found myself presented the appearance of a perfect flower-garden, with scarcely a square foot of green to be seen. The most variegated carpet of flowers I ever beheld lay unrolled before me; red, yellow, violet, blue, every colour, every tint, was there; millions of the most magnificent prairie roses, tube-roses, asters, dahlias, and fifty other kinds of flowers. The finest artificial garden in the world would sink into insignificance when compared with this parterre of nature's own planting. My horse could scarcely make his way through the wilderness of flowers, and I for a time remained lost in admiration of this scene of extraordinary beauty. The prairie in the distance looked as if clothed with rainbows, that waved to and fro over its surface.

But the difficulties and anxieties of my situation, soon banished all other thoughts, and I rode on with a perfect indifference through a scene, that, under other circumstances, would have captivated my entire attention. All the stories that I had heard of mishaps in these endless prairies, recurred in vivid colouring to my memory, not mere backwoodsman's legends, but facts well authenticated by persons of undoubted veracity, who had warned me, before I came to Texas, against venturing without guide or compass into these dangerous wilds. Even men who had been long in the country, were often known to lose themselves, and to wander for days and weeks over these oceans of grass, where no hill or variety of surface offers a landmark to the traveller. In summer and autumn, such a position would have one danger the less, that is, there would be no risk of dying of hunger; for at those seasons the most delicious fruits, grapes, plums, peaches, and others, are to be found in abundance. But we were now in early spring, and although I saw numbers of peach and plum-trees, they were only in blossom. Of game also there was plenty, both fur and feather, but I had no gun, and nothing appeared more probable than that I should die of hunger, although surrounded by food, and in one of the most frightful countries in the world. This thought flashed suddenly across me, and for a moment my heart sunk within me as I first perceived the real danger of my position.

After a time, however, other ideas came

to console me. I had been already four weeks in the country, and had ridden over a large slice of it in every direction, always through prairies, and I had never had any difficulty in finding my way. True, but then I had always had a compass, and been in company. It was this sort of over-confidence and feeling of security, that had made me adventure so rashly, and spite of all warning, in pursuit of the mustang. I had not waited to reflect, that a little more than four weeks was necessary to make one acquainted with the bearings of a district three times as big as New York State. Still I thought it impossible that I should have got so far out of the right track as not to be able to find the house before nightfall, which was now, however, rapidly approaching. Indeed, the first shades of evening, strange as it may seem, gave this persuasion increased strength. Home-bred and gently nurtured as I was, my life before coming to Texas had been by no means one of adventure, and I was so used to sleep with a roof over my head, that when I saw it getting dusk I felt certain that I could not be far from the house. The idea fixed itself so strongly in my mind, that I involuntarily spurred my mustang, and trotted on, peering out through the now fast-gathering gloom, in expectation of seeing a light. Several times I fancied I heard the barking of the dogs, the lowing cattle, or the merry laugh of the children.

"Hurrah! there is the house at last—I see the lights in the parlour windows."

I urged my horse on, but when I came near the house, it proved to be an island of trees. What I had taken for candles were fire-flies, that now issued in swarms from out of the darkness of the islands, and spread themselves over the prairie, darting about in every direction, their small blue flames literally lighting up the plain, and making it appear as if I were surrounded by a sea of Bengal fire. It is impossible to conceive any thing more bewildering than such a ride as mine, on a warm March night, through the interminable, never-varying prairie. Overhead the deep blue firmament, with its hosts of bright stars; at my feet, and all around, an ocean of magical light, myriads of fireflies floating upon the soft still air. To me it was like a scene of enchantment. I could distinguish every blade of grass, every flower, each leaf on the trees, but all in a strange, unnatural sort of light, and in altered colours. Tube-roses and asters, prairie roses and gera-

niums, dahlias and vine branches, began to wave and move, to range themselves in ranks and rows. The whole vegetable world around me seemed to dance, as the swarms of living lights passed over it.

Suddenly out of the sea of fire sounded a loud and long-drawn note. I stopped, listened, gazed around me. It was not repeated, and I rode on. Again the same sound, but this time the cadence was sad and plaintive. Again I made a halt, and listened. It was repeated a third time in a yet more melancholy tone, and I recognised it as the cry of the whip-poor-will. Presently it was answered from a neighbouring island by a Katydid. My heart leaped for joy at hearing the note of this bird, the native minstrel of my own dear Maryland. In an instant the house where I was born stood before the eyesight of my imagination. There were the negro huts, the garden, the plantation, every thing exactly as I had left it. So powerful was the illusion, that I gave my horse the spur, persuaded that my father's house lay before me. The island, too, I took for the grove that surrounded our house. On reaching its border, I literally dismounted, and shouted out for Charon Tommy. There was a stream running through our plantation, which, for nine months out of the twelve, was only passable by means of a ferry, and the old negro who officiated as ferryman was indebted to me for the above classical cognomen. I believe I called twice, nay, three times, but no Charon Tommy answered; and I awoke as from a pleasant dream, somewhat ashamed of the length to which my excited imagination had hurried me.

I now felt so weary and exhausted, so hungry and thirsty, and, withal, my mind was so anxious and harassed by my dangerous position, and the uncertainty how I should get out of it, that I was really incapable of going any further. I felt quite bewildered, and stood for some time gazing before me, and scarcely even troubling myself to think. At length I mechanically drew my clasp-knife from my pocket, and set to work to dig a hole in the rich black soil of the prairie. Into this hole I put the knotted end of my lasso, and then pushing it in the earth and stamping it down with my foot, as I had seen others do since I had been in Texas, I passed the noose over my mustang's neck, and left him to graze, while I myself lay down outside the circle which the lasso would allow him to describe. An odd manner, it

may seem, of tying up a horse; but the most convenient and natural one in a country where one may often find one's-self fifty miles from any house, and five-and-twenty from a tree or bush.

I found it no easy matter to sleep, for on all sides I heard the howling of wolves and jaguars, an unpleasant serenade at any time, but most of all so in the prairie, unarmed and defenceless as I was. My nerves, too, were all in commotion, and I felt so feverish, that I do not know what I should have done, had I not fortunately remembered that I had my cigar-case and a roll of tobacco, real Virginia *dulcissimus*, in my pocket—invaluable treasures in my present situation, and which on this, as on many other occasions, did not fail to soothe and calm my agitated thoughts.

Luckily, too, being a tolerably confirmed smoker, I carried a flint and steel with me; for otherwise, although surrounded by lights, I should have been sadly at a loss for fire. A couple of Havannahs did me an infinite deal of good, and after a while I sunk into the slumber of which I stood so much in need.

The day was hardly well broken when I awoke. The refreshing sleep I had enjoyed had given me new energy and courage. I felt hungry enough, to be sure, but light and cheerful, and I hastened to dig up the end of the lasso, and saddled my horse. I trusted that, though I had been condemned to wander over the prairie the whole of the preceding day, as a sort of punishment for my rashness, I should now have better luck, and having expiated my fault, be at length allowed to find my way. With this hope I mounted my mustang, and resumed my ride.

I passed several beautiful islands of pecan, plum, and peach trees. It is a peculiarity worthy of remark, that these islands are nearly always of one sort of tree. It is very rare to meet with one where there are two sorts. Like the beasts of the forest, that herd together according to their kind, so does this wild vegetation preserve itself distinct in its different species. One island will be entirely composed of live oaks, another of plum, and a third of pecan trees; the vine only is common to them all, and embraces them all alike in its slender but tenacious branches. I rode through several of these islands. They were perfectly free from bushes and brushwood, and carpeted with the most beautiful verdure it is possible to behold. I gazed at them in

astonishment. It seemed incredible that nature, abandoned to herself, should preserve herself so beautifully clean and pure, and I involuntarily looked around me for some trace of the hand of man. But none was there. I saw nothing but herds of deer, that gazed wonderingly at me with their large clear eyes, and when I approached too near, galloped off in alarm. What would I not have given for an ounce of lead, a charge of powder, and a Kentucky rifle? Nevertheless, the mere sight of the beasts gladdened me and raised my spirits. They were a sort of society. Something of the same feeling seemed to be imparted to my horse, who bounded under me, and neighed merrily as he cantered along in the fresh spring morning.

I was now skirting the side of an island of trees of greater extent than most of those I had hitherto seen. On reaching the end of it, I suddenly came in sight of an object presenting so extraordinary an appearance as far to surpass any of the natural wonders I had as yet beheld, either in Texas or the United States.

At the distance of about two miles rose a colossal mass, in shape somewhat like a monumental mound or tumulus, and apparently of the brightest silver. As I came in view of it, the sun was just covered by a passing cloud, from the lower edge of which the bright rays shot down obliquely upon this extraordinary phenomenon, lighting it up in the most brilliant manner. At one moment it looked like a huge silver cone; then took the appearance of an illuminated castle with pinnacles and towers, or the dome of some great cathedral; then of a gigantic elephant, covered with trappings, but always of solid silver, and indescribably magnificent. Had all the treasures of the earth been offered me to say what it was, I should have been unable to answer. Bewildered by my interminable wanderings in the prairie, and weakened by fatigue and hunger, a superstitious feeling for a moment came over me, and I half asked myself whether I had not reached some enchanted region, into which the evil spirit of the prairie was luring me to destruction by appearances of supernatural strangeness and beauty.

Banishing these wild imaginings, I rode on in the direction of this strange object; but it was only when I came within a very short distance that I was able to distinguish its nature. It was a live oak of most stupendous dimensions, the very patriarch of the prairie,

grown gray in the lapse of ages. Its lower limbs had shot out in an horizontal, or rather a downward, slanting direction, and, reaching nearly to the ground, formed a vast dome several hundred feet in diameter, and full a hundred and thirty feet high. It had no appearance of a tree, for neither trunk nor branches were visible. It seemed a mountain of whitish-green scales, fringed with a long silvery moss, that hung like innumerable beards from every bough and twig. Nothing could better convey the idea of immense and incalculable age than the hoary beard and venerable appearance of this monarch of the woods. Spanish moss of a silvery gray covered the whole mass of wood and foliage, from the topmost bough down to the very ground; short near the top of the tree, but gradually increasing in length as it descended, until it hung like a deep fringe from the lower branches. I separated the vegetable curtain with my hands, and entered this august temple with feelings of involuntary awe. The change from the bright sunlight to the comparative darkness beneath the leafy vault, was so great, that I at first could scarcely distinguish any thing. When my eyes got accustomed to the gloom, however, nothing could be more beautiful than the effect of the sun's rays, which in forcing their way through the silvered leaves and mosses, took as many varieties of colour as if they had passed through a window of painted glass, and gave the rich, subdued, and solemn light of some old cathedral.

The trunk of the tree rose, free from all branches, full forty feet from the ground, rough and knotted, and of such enormous size that it might have been taken for a mass of rock, covered with moss and lichens, while many of its boughs were nearly as thick as the trunk of any tree I had ever previously seen.

I was so absorbed in the contemplation of the vegetable giant, that for a short space I almost forgot my troubles; but as I rode away from the tree they returned to me in full force, and my reflections were certainly of no very cheering or consolatory nature. I rode on, however, most perseveringly. The morning slipped away; it was noon, the sun stood high in the cloudless heavens. My hunger was now increased to an insupportable degree, and I felt as if something were gnawing within me, something like a crab tugging and riving at my stomach with his sharp claws. This feeling left me after a time, and

was replaced by a sort of squeamishness, a faint sickly sensation. But if hunger was bad, thirst was worse. For some hours I suffered martyrdom. At length, like the hunger, it died away, and was succeeded by a feeling of sickness. The thirty hours' fatigue and fasting I had endured were beginning to tell upon my naturally strong nerves: I felt my reasoning powers growing weaker, and my presence of mind leaving me. A feeling of despondency came over me—a thousand wild fancies passed through my bewildered brain; while at times my head grew dizzy, and I reeled in my saddle like a drunken man. These weak fits, as I may call them, did not last long; and each time that I recovered I spurred my mustang onward, but it was all in vain—ride as far and as fast as I would, nothing was visible but a boundless sea of grass.

At length I gave up all hope, except in that God whose almighty hand was so manifest in the beautiful works around me. I let the bridle fall on my horse's neck, clasped my hands together, and prayed as I had never before prayed, so heartily and earnestly. When I had finished my prayer I felt greatly comforted. It seemed to me, that here in the wilderness, which man had not as yet polluted, I was nearer to God, and that my petition would assuredly be heard. I gazed cheerfully around, persuaded that I should yet escape from the peril in which I stood. As I did so, with what astonishment and inexpressible delight did I perceive, not ten paces off, the track of a horse.

The effect of this discovery was like an electric shock to me, and drew a cry of joy from my lips that made my mustang start and prick his ears. Tears of delight and gratitude to Heaven came into my eyes, and I could scarcely refrain from leaping off my horse and kissing the welcome signs that gave me assurance of succour. With renewed strength I galloped onward; and, had I been a lover flying to rescue his mistress from an Indian war party, I could not have displayed more eagerness than I did in following up the trail of an unknown traveller.

Never had I felt so thankful to Providence as that moment. I uttered thanksgivings as I rode on, and contemplated the wonderful evidences of his skill and might, that offered themselves to me on all sides. The aspect of every thing seemed changed, and I gazed with renewed admiration at the scenes through which I passed, and which I had previously

been too preoccupied by the danger of my position to notice. The beautiful appearance of the islands struck me particularly as they lay in the distance, seeming to swim in the bright golden beams of the noon-day sun, like dark spots of foliage in the midst of the waving grasses and many-hued flowers of the prairie. Before me lay the eternal flower-carpet with its innumerable asters, tube-roses, and mimosas, that delicate plant which, when you approach it, lifts its head, seems to look at you, and then droops and shrinks back in alarm. This I saw it do when I was two or three paces from it, and without my horse's foot having touched it. Its long roots stretch out horizontally in the ground, and the approaching tread of a horse or man is communicated through them to the plant, and produces this singular phenomenon. When the danger is gone by, and the earth ceases to vibrate, the mimosa may be seen to raise its head again, but quivering and trembling as though not yet fully recovered from its fears.

I had ridden on for three or four hours, following the track I had so fortunately discovered, when I came upon the trace of a second horseman, who appeared to have here joined the first traveller. It ran in a parallel direction to the one I was following.

Had it been possible to increase my joy, this discovery would have done so. I could now entertain no doubt that I had hit upon the way out of this terrible prairie. It struck me as rather singular that two travellers should have met in this immense plain, which so few persons traversed, but that they had done so was certain, for there was the track of the two horses as plain as possible. The trail was fresh, too, and it was evidently not long since the horsemen had passed. It might still be possible to overtake them, and in this hope I rode on faster than ever, as fast, at least, as my mustang could carry me through the thick grass and flowers, which in many places were four or five feet high.

During the next three hours I passed over some ten or twelve miles of ground; but although the trail still lay plainly and broadly marked before me, I saw nothing of those who had left it. Still I persevered. I must overtake them sooner or later, provided I did not lose the track; and that I was most careful not to do, keeping my eyes fixed upon the ground as I rode along, not deviating from the line which the travellers had followed.

In this manner the day passed away, and evening approached. I still felt hope and courage; but my physical strength began to give way. The gnawing sensation of hunger increased. I was sick and faint; my limbs became heavy, my blood seemed chilled in my veins, and all my senses appeared to grow duller under the influence of exhaustion, thirst and hunger. My eyesight became misty, my hearing less acute, the bridle felt cold and heavy in my fingers.

Still I rode on. Sooner or later I must find an outlet; the prairie must have an end somewhere. It is true the whole of Southern Texas is one vast prairie; but then there are rivers flowing through it, and if I could reach one of those, I should not be far from the abodes of men. By following the streams five or six miles up or down, I should be sure to find a plantation.

As I was thus reasoning with and encouraging myself, I suddenly perceived the traces of a third horse, running parallel to the two which I had been so long following. This was indeed encouragement. It was certain that three travellers, arriving from different points of the prairie, and all going in the same direction, must have some object, must be repairing to some village or clearing, and where or what this was had now become indifferent to me, so long as I once more found myself among my fellow-men. I spurred on my mustang, who was beginning to flag a little in his pace with the fatigue of our long ride.

The sun set behind the high trees of an island that bounded my view westward, and there being little or no twilight in those southerly latitudes, the broad day was almost instantaneously replaced by the darkness of night. I could proceed no further without losing the track of the three horseman; and as I happened to be close to an island, I fastened my mustang to a branch with the lasso, and threw myself on the grass under the trees.

This night, however, I had no fancy for tobacco. Neither the cigars nor the *dulcis-simus* tempted me. I tried to sleep, but in vain. Once or twice I began to doze, but was roused again by violent cramps and twitchings in all my limbs. There is nothing more horrible than a night passed in the way I passed that one, faint and weak, enduring torture from hunger and thirst, striving after sleep and never finding it. I can only compare the sensation of hunger I experienced

to that of twenty pairs of pincers tearing at my stomach.

With the first gray light of morning I got up and prepared for departure. It was a long business, however, to get my horse ready. The saddle, which at other times I could throw upon his back with two fingers, now seemed made of lead, and it was as much as I could do to lift it. I had still more difficulty to draw the girths tight; but at last I accomplished this, and scrambling upon my beast, rode off. Luckily my mustang's spirit was pretty well taken out of him by the last two days' work; for if he had been fresh, the smallest spring on one side would have sufficed to throw me out of the saddle. As it was, I sat upon him like an automaton, hanging forward over his neck, sometimes grasping the mane, and almost unable to use either rein or spur.

I had ridden on for some hours in this helpless manner, when I came to a place where the three horsemen whose track I was following, had apparently made a halt, perhaps passed the previous night. The grass was trampled and beaten down in a circumference of some fifty or sixty feet, and there was a confusion in the horse tracks as if they had ridden backward and forward. Fearful of losing the right track, I was looking carefully about me to see in what direction they had recommenced their journey, when I noticed something white among the long grass, I got off my horse to pick it up. It was a piece of paper with my own name written upon it; and I recognised it as the back of a letter in which my tobacco had been wrapped, and which I had thrown away at my halting place of the preceding night. I looked around, and recognised the island and the very tree under which I had slept or endeavoured to sleep. The horrible truth instantly flashed across me—the horse tracks I had been following were my own: since the preceding morning I had been riding in a *circle!*

I stood for a few seconds thunderstruck by this discovery, and then sank upon the ground in utter despair. At that moment I should have been thankful to any one who would have knocked me on the head as I lay. All I wished for was to die as speedily as possible.

I remained I know not how long lying in a depending, half insensible, state upon the grass. Several hours must have elapsed; for when I got up the sun was low in the

western heavens. My head was so weak and wandering, that I could not well explain to myself how it was that I had been thus riding after my own shadow. Yet the thing was clear enough. Without landmarks, and in the monotonous scenery of the prairie, I might have gone on for ever following my horse's track, and going back when I thought I was going forward, had it not been for the discovery of the tobacco paper. I was, as I subsequently learned, in the Jacinto prairie, one of the most beautiful in Texas, full sixty miles long and broad, but in which the most experienced hunters never risked themselves without a compass. It was little wonder then that I, a mere boy of two and twenty, just escaped from college, should have gone astray in it.

I now gave myself up for lost, and with the bridle twisted round my hand, and holding on as well as I could by the saddle and mane, I let my horse choose his own road. It would perhaps have been better if I had done this sooner. The beast's instinct would probably have led him to some plantation. When he found himself left to his own guidance he threw up his head, snuffed the air three or four times, and then turning round, set off in a contrary direction to that he was before going, and at such a brisk pace, that it was as much as I could do to keep upon him. Every jolt caused me so much pain that I was more than once tempted to let myself fall off his back.

At last night came, and thanks to the lasso, which kept my horse in awe, I managed to dismount and secure him. The whole night through I suffered from racking pains in my head, limbs, and body. I felt as if I had been broken on the wheel; not an inch of my whole person but ached and smarted. My hands were grown thin and transparent, my cheeks fallen in, my eyes deep sunk in their sockets. When I touched my face I could feel the change that had taken place, and as I did so I caught myself once or twice laughing like a child—I was becoming delirious.

In the morning I could scarcely rise from the ground, so utterly weakened and exhausted was I by my three days' fasting, anxiety, and fatigue. I have heard say that a man in good health can live nine days without food. It may be so in a room, or a prison; but assuredly not in a Texan prairie. I am quite certain that the fifth day would have seen the last of me.

I should never have been able to mount my mustang, but he had fortunately lain down, so I got into the saddle, and he rose up with me and started off of his own accord. As I rode along, the strangest visions seemed to pass before me. I saw the most beautiful cities that a painter's fancy ever conceived, with towers, cupolas, and columns, of which the summits lost themselves in the clouds; marble basins and fountains of bright sparkling water, rivers flowing with liquid gold and silver, and gardens in which the trees were bowed down with the most magnificent fruit; fruit that I had not strength enough to raise my hand and pluck. My limbs were heavy as lead, my tongue, lips, and gums, dry and parched. I breathed with the greatest difficulty, and within me was a burning sensation, as if I had swallowed hot coals; while my extremities, both hands and feet, did not appear to form a part of myself, but to be instruments of torture affixed to me, and causing me the most intense suffering.

I have a confused recollection of a sort of rushing noise, the nature of which I was unable to determine, so nearly had all consciousness left me; then of finding myself among trees, the leaves and boughs of which scratched and beat against my face as I passed through; then of a sudden and rapid descent, with the broad bright surface of a river below me. I clutched at a branch, but my fingers had no strength to retain their grasp; there was a hissing, splashing noise, and the waters closed over my head.

I soon rose, and endeavoured to strike out with my arms and legs, but in vain; I was too weak to swim, and again I went down. A thousand lights seemed to dance before my eyes: there was a noise in my brain as if a four-and-twenty pounder had been fired close to my ear. Just then a hard hand was wrung into my neckcloth, and I felt myself dragged out of the water. The next instant my senses left me.

#### NO. II.—A TRIAL BY JURY.

WHEN I recovered from my state of insensibility, and once more opened my eyes, I was lying on the bank of a small but deep river. My horse was grazing quietly a few yards off, and beside me stood a man with folded arms, holding a wicker-covered flask in his hand. This was all I was able to observe; for my state of weakness prevented me from getting up and looking around me.



"Where am I?" I gasped.

"Where are you, stranger? By the Jacinto; and that you are *by* it, and not *in* it, is no fault of your'n, I reckon."

There was something harsh and repulsive in the tone and manner in which these words were spoken, and in the grating scornful laugh that accompanied them, that jarred upon my nerves, and inspired me with a feeling of aversion towards the speaker. I knew that he was my deliverer; that he had saved my life, when my mustang, raging with thirst, had sprung head-foremost into the water; that, without him, I must inevitably have been drowned, even had the river been less deep than it was; and that it was by his care, and the whisky he had made me swallow, and of which I still felt the flavour on my tongue, that I had been recovered from the death-like swoon into which I had fallen. But had he done ten times as much for me, I could not have repressed the feeling of repugnance, the inexplicable dislike, with which the mere tones of his voice filled me. I turned my head away in order not to see him. There was a silence of some moments' duration.

"Don't seem as if my company was over and above agreeable," said the man at last.

"Your company not agreeable? This is the fourth day since I saw the face of a human being. During that time not a bit nor a drop has passed my tongue."

"Hallo! That's a lie," shouted the man with another strange wild laugh. "You've taken a mouthful out of my flask; not *taken* it, certainly, but it went over your tongue all the same. Where do you come from? The beast ain't your'n."

"Mr. Neal's," answered I.

"See it is by the brand. But what brings you here from Mr. Neal's? It's a good seventy mile to his plantation, right across the prairie. Ain't stole the horse, have you?"

"Lost my way—four days—eaten nothing."

These words were all I could articulate. I was too weak to talk.

"Four days without eatin'," cried the man, with a laugh like sharpening of a saw, "and that in a Texas prairie, and with islands on all sides of you! Ha! I see how it is. You're a gentleman—that's plain enough. I was a sort of one myself once. You thought our Texas prairies was like the prairies in the States. Ha, ha! And so you didn't know how to help yourself. Did you

see no bees in the air, no strawberries on the earth?"

"Bees? Strawberries?" repeated I.

"Yes, bees, which live in the hollow trees. Out of twenty-three trees there's sure to be one full of honey. So you saw no bees, eh? Perhaps you don't know the creturs' when you see 'em! Ain't altogether so big as wild-geese or turkeys. But you must know what strawberries are, and that *they* don't grow upon the trees."

All this was spoken in the same sneering savage manner as before, with the speaker's head half turned over his shoulder, while his features were distorted into a contemptuous grin.

"And if I had seen the bees, how was I to get at the honey without an axe?"

"How did you lose yourself?"

"My mustang—ran away"—

"I see. And you after him. You'd have done better to let him run. But what d'ye mean to do now?"

"I am weak—sick to death. I wish to get to the nearest house—an inn—anywhere where men are."

"Where men are," repeated the stranger, with his scornful smile. "Where men are," he muttered again, taking a few steps on one side.

I was hardly able to turn my head, but there was something strange in the man's movement that alarmed me; and, making a violent effort, I changed my position sufficiently to get him in sight again. He had drawn a long knife from his girdle, which he clutched in one hand, while he ran the fore finger of the other along its edge. I now for the first time got a full view of his face, and the impression it made upon me was any thing but favourable. His countenance was the wildest I had ever seen; his bloodshot eyes rolled like balls of fire in their sockets; while his movements and manner were indicative of a violent inward struggle. He did not stand still for three seconds together, but paced backwards and forwards with hurried irregular steps, casting wild glances over his shoulder, his fingers playing all the while with the knife, with the rapid and objectless movements of a maniac.

I felt convinced that I was the cause of the struggle visibly going on within him; that my life or death was what he was deciding upon. But in the state I then was, death had no terror for me. The image of my

mother, sisters, and father, passed before my eyes. I gave one thought to my peaceful happy home, and then looked upwards and prayed.

The man had walked off to some distance. I turned myself a little more round, and, as I did so, I caught sight of the same magnificent phenomenon which I had met with on the second day of my wanderings. The colossal live oak rose in all its silvery splendour, at the distance of a couple of miles. Whilst I was gazing at it, and reflecting on the strange ill luck that had made me pass within so short a distance of the river without finding it, I saw my new acquaintance approach a neighbouring cluster of trees, amongst which he disappeared.

After a short time I again perceived him coming towards me with a slow and staggering step. As he drew near, I had an opportunity of examining his whole appearance. He was very tall and lean, but large-boned, and apparently of great strength. His face, which had not been shaved for several weeks was so tanned by sun and weather, that he might have been taken for an Indian, had not the beard proved his claim to white blood. But his eyes were what most struck me. There was something so frightfully wild in their expression, a look of terror and desperation, like that of a man whom all the furies of hell were hunting and persecuting. His hair hung in long ragged locks over his forehead, cheeks, and neck, and round his head was bound a handkerchief, on which were several stains of a brownish black colour. Spots of the same kind were visible upon his leathern jacket, breeches, and moccasins; they were evidently blood stains. His hunting knife, which was nearly two feet long, with a rude wooden handle, was now replaced in his girdle, but in its stead he held a Kentucky rifle in his hand.

Although I did my utmost to assume an indifferent countenance, my features doubtless expressed something of the repugnance and horror with which the man inspired me. He looked loweringly at me for a moment from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"You don't seem to like the company you've got into," said he. "Do I look so very desperate, then? Is it written so plainly on my face?"

"What should there be written on your face?"

"What? What? Fools and children ask them questions."

"I will ask you none; but as a Christian, as my countryman, I beseech you"——

"Christian!" interrupted he, with a hollow laugh. "Countryman!" He struck the butt of his rifle hard upon the ground. "That is my countryman—my only friend!" he continued, as he examined the flint and lock of his weapon. "That releases from all troubles: that's a true friend. Pooh! perhaps it'll release you too—put you to rest."

These last words were uttered aside, and musingly.

"Put him to rest, as well as——Pooh! One more or less—Perhaps it would drive away that cursed spectre."

All this seemed to be spoken to his rifle. "Will you swear not to betray me?" cried he to me. "Else, one touch"——

As he spoke, he brought the gun to his shoulder, the muzzle pointed full at my breast.

I felt no fear. I am sure my pulse did not give a throb the more for this menace. So deadly weak and helpless as I lay, it was unnecessary to shoot me. The slightest blow from the butt of the rifle would have driven the last faint spark of life out of my exhausted body. I looked calmly, indifferently even, into the muzzle of the piece.

"If you can answer it to your God, to your and my judge and creator, do your will."

My words, which from faintness I could scarcely render audible, had, nevertheless, a sudden and startling effect upon the man. He trembled from head to foot, let the butt of his gun fall heavily to the ground, and gazed at me with open mouth and staring eyes.

"This one, too, comes with his God!" muttered he. "God! and your and my creator—and—judge."

He seemed hardly able to articulate these words, which were uttered by gasps and efforts, as though something had been choking him.

"His and my—judge"—groaned he again. "Can there be a God, a creator and a judge?"

As he stood thus muttering to himself, his eyes suddenly became fixed, and his features horribly distorted.

"Do it not!" cried he, in a shrill tone of horror, that rang through my head. "It will bring no blessing with it. I am a dead man! God be merciful to me! My poor wife, my poor children!"

The rifle fell from his hands, and he smote

his breast and forehead in a paroxysm of the wildest fury. It was frightful to behold the conscience-stricken wretch, stamping madly about, and casting glances of terror behind him, as though demons had been hunting him down. The foam flew from his mouth, and I expected each moment to see him fall to the ground in a fit of epilepsy. Gradually, however, he became more tranquil.

"D'ye see nothin' in my face?" said he in a hoarse whisper, suddenly pausing close to where I lay.

"What should I see?"

He came yet nearer.

"Look well at me—*through* me, if you can. D'ye see nothin' now?"

"I see nothing," replied I.

"Ah! I understand, you can see nothin'. Ain't in a spyin' humour, I calculate. No, no, that you ain't. After four days and nights fastin', one loses the fancy for many things. I've tried it for two days myself. So, you are weak and faint, eh? But I needn't ask that I reckon. You look bad enough. Take another drop of whisky; it'll strengthen you. But wait till I mix it."

As he spoke, he stepped down to the edge of the river, and scooping up the water in the hollow of his hand, filled his flask with it. Then returning to me, he poured a little into my mouth.

Even the blood-thirsty Indian appears less of a savage when engaged in a compassionate act, and the wild desperado I had fallen in with, seemed softened and humanized by the service he was rendering me. His voice sounded less harsh; his manner was calmer and milder.

"You wish to go to an inn?"

"For Heaven's sake, yes. These four days I have tasted nothing but a bit of tobacco."

"Can you spare a bit of that?"

"All I have."

I handed him my cigar case, and the roll of *dulcissimus*. He snatched the latter from me, and bit into it with the furious eagerness of a wolf.

"Ah, the right sort this!" muttered he to himself. "Ah, young man, or old man—you're an old man, ain't you? How old are you?"

"Two-and-twenty."

He shook his head doubtfully.

"Can hardly believe that. But four days in the prairie, and nothin' to eat. Well, it

may be so. But, stranger, if I had had this bit of tobacco only ten days ago—A bit of tobacco is worth a deal sometimes. It might have saved a man's life"

Again he groaned, and his accents became wild and unnatural.

"I say, stranger!" cried he in a threatening tone. "I say! D'ye see yonder live oak? D'ye see it? It's the Patriarch, and a finer and mightier one you won't find in the prairies, I reckon. D'ye see it?"

"I do see it."

"Ah! you see it," cried he fiercely. "And what is it to you? What have you to do with the Patriarch, or with what lies under it? I reckon you had best not be too curious that way. If you dare take a step under that tree."—He swore an oath too horrible to be repeated.

"There's a spectre there," cried he; "a spectre that would fright you to death. Better keep away."

"I will keep away," replied I. "I never thought of going near it. All I want is to get to the nearest plantation or inn."

"Ah! true, man—the next inn. I'll show you the way to it. I will."

"You will save my life by so doing," said I, "and I shall be ever grateful to you as my deliverer."

"Deliverer!" repeated he with a wild laugh. "Pooh! If you knew what sort of a deliverer—Pooh! what's the use of savin' a life, when—yet I will—I will save yours; perhaps the cursed spectre will leave me then. Will you not? Will you not?" cried he, suddenly changing his scornful mocking tones to those of entreaty and supplication, and turning his face in the direction of the live oak. Again his wildness of manner returned, and his eyes became fixed, as he gazed for some moments at the gigantic tree. Then darting away, he disappeared among the trees, whence he had fetched his rifle, and presently emerged again, leading a ready saddled horse with him. He called to me to mount mine, but seeing that I was unable even to rise from the ground, he stepped up to me, and with the greatest ease lifted me into the saddle with one hand, so light had I become during my long fast. Then taking the end of my lasso, he got upon his own horse and set off leading my mustang after him.

We rode on for some time without exchanging a word. My guide kept up a sort of muttered soliloquy; but as I was full ten

paces in his rear, I could distinguish nothing of what he said. At times he would raise his rifle to his shoulder, then lower it again, and speak to it, sometimes caressingly, sometimes in anger. More than once he turned his head, and cast keen searching glances at me, as though to see whether I were watching him or not.

We had ridden more than an hour, and the strength which the whisky had given me was fast failing, so that I expected each moment to fall from my horse, when suddenly I caught sight of a kind of rude hedge, and almost immediately afterwards the wall of a small block house became visible. A faint cry of joy escaped me, and I endeavoured but in vain to give my horse the spur. My guide turned round, fixed his wild eyes upon me, and spoke in a threatening tone.

"You are impatient, man! impatient, I see. You think now, perhaps?"

"I am dying," was all I could utter. In fact, my senses were leaving me from exhaustion, and I really thought my last hour was come.

"Pooh! dyin'! One don't die so easy. And yet—d——n!—it might be true."

He sprang off his horse, and was just in time to catch me in his arms as I fell from the saddle. A few drops of whisky, however, restored me to consciousness. My guide replaced me upon my mustang, and after passing through a potato ground, a field of Indian corn, and a small grove of peach-trees, we found ourselves at the door of the block-house.

I was so utterly helpless, that my strange companion was obliged to lift me off my horse, and carry me into the dwelling. He sat me down upon a bench, passive and powerless as an infant. Strange to say, however, I was never better able to observe all that passed around me, than during the few hours of bodily debility that succeeded my immersion in the Jacinto. A blow with a reed would have knocked me off my seat, but my mental faculties, instead of participating in this weakness, seemed sharpened to an unusual degree of acuteness.

The blockhouse in which we now were, was of the poorest possible description; a mere log hut, consisting of one room, that served as kitchen, sitting-room, and bed-chamber. The door of rough planks swung heavily upon two hooks that fitted into iron rings, and formed a clumsy substitute for hinges; a wooden latch and heavy bar served

to secure it; windows, properly speaking there were none, but in their stead a few holes covered with dirty oiled paper; the floor was of clay, stamped hard and dry in the middle of the hut, but out of which, at the sides of the room, a crop of rank grass was growing, a foot or more high. In one corner stood a clumsy bedstead, in another a sort of table or counter, on which were half a dozen drinking glasses of various sizes and patterns. The table consisted of four thick posts, firmly planted in the ground, and on which were nailed three boards that had apparently belonged to some chest or case, for they were partly painted, and there was a date, and the three first letters of a word upon one of them. A shelf fixed against the side of the hut supported an earthen pot or two, and three or four bottles, uncorked, and apparently empty; and from some wooden pegs wedged in between the logs, hung suspended a few articles of wearing apparel of no very cleanly aspect.

Pacing up and down the hut with a kind of stealthy cat-like pace, was an individual, whose unprepossessing exterior was in good keeping with the wretched appearance of this Texian shebeen house. He was an undersized, stooping figure, red-haired, large mouthed, and possessed of small, reddish, pig's eyes, which he seemed totally unable to raise from the ground, and the lowering, hang-dog expression of which, corresponded fully with the treacherous, panther-like stealthiness of his step and movements. Without greeting us either by word or look, this personage dived into a dark corner of his tenement, brought out a full bottle, and placing it on the table beside the glasses, resumed the monotonous sort of exercise in which he had been indulging on our entrance.

My guide and deliverer said nothing while the tavern-keeper was getting out the bottle, although he seemed to watch all his movements with a keen and suspicious eye. He now filled a large glass of spirits, and tossed it off at a single draught. When he had done this, he spoke for the first time.

"Johnny!"

Johnny made no answer.

"This gentleman has eaten nothing for four days."

"Indeed!" replied Johnny, without looking up, or intermitting his sneaking, restless walk from one corner of the room to the other.

"I said four days, d'ye hear? Four days.

Bring him tea immediately, strong tea, and then make some good beef soup. The tea must be ready directly, the soup in an hour at furthest; d'ye understand? And then I want some whisky for myself, and a beef-steak and potatoes. Now, tell all that to your Sambo."

Johnny did not seem to hear, but continued his walk, creeping along with noiseless step, and each time that he turned, giving a sort of spring like a cat or a panther.

"I've money, Johnny," said my guide. "Money, man, d'ye hear!" And so saying, he produced a tolerably full purse.

For the first time Johnny raised his head, gave an indefinable sort of glance at the purse, and then springing forward, fixed his small, cunning eyes upon those of my guide, while a smile of strange meaning spread over his repulsive features.

The two men stood for the space of a minute, staring at each other, without uttering a word. An infernal grin distended Johnny's coarse mouth from ear to ear. My guide seemed to gasp for breath.

"I've money," cried he at last, striking the butt of his rifle violently on the ground. "D'ye understand, Johnny? Money; and a rifle too, if needs be."

He stepped to the table and filled another glass of raw spirits, which disappeared like the preceding one. While he drank, Johnny stole out of the room so softly, that my companion was only made aware of his departure by the noise of the wooden latch. He then came up to me, took me in his arms without saying a word, and, carrying me to the bed, laid me gently down upon it.

"You make yourself at home," snarled Johnny, who just then came in again.

"Always do that, I reckon, when I'm in a tavern," answered my guide, quietly pouring out and swallowing another glassful. "The gentleman shall have your bed to-day. You and Sambo may sleep in the pigsty. You have none though, I believe?"

"Bob!" screamed Johnny, furiously.

"That's my name—Bob Rock."

"For the present," hissed Johnny, with a sneer.

"The same as yours is Johnny Down," replied Bob, in the same tone. "Pooh! Johnny, guess we know one another?"

"Rayther calkilate we do," replied Johnny through his teeth.

"And have done many a day," laughed Bob.

"You're the famous Bob from Sodoma, in Georgia."

"Sodoma in Alabama, Johnny. Sodoma lies in Alabama," said Bob, filling another glass. "Don't you know that yet, you who were above a year in Columbus, doin' all sorts of dirty work?"

"Better hold your tongue, Bob," said Johnny, with a dangerous look at me.

"Pooh! don't mind him; he won't talk, I'll answer for it. He's lost the taste for chatterin' in the Jacinto prairie. But Sodoma," continued Bob, "is in Alabama, man! Columbus in Georgia! They are parted by the Chatahoochie. Ah! that was a jolly life we led on the Chatahoochie. But nothin' lasts in this world, as my old schoolmaster used to say. Pooh! They've druv the Injuns a step further over the Mississippi now. But it was a glorious life—warn't it?"

Again he filled his glass and drank.

The information I gathered from this conversation, as to the previous life and habits of these two men, had nothing in it very satisfactory or re-assuring for me. In the whole of the south-western states there was no place that could boast of being the resort of so many outlaws and bad characters as the town of Sodoma. It is situated, or was situated, at least, a few years previously to the time I speak of, in Alabama, on Indian ground, and was the harbour of refuge for all the murderers and outcasts from the western and south-western parts of the Union. Here, under Indian government, they found shelter and security; and frightful were the crimes and cruelties perpetrated at this place. Scarcely a day passed without an assassination, not secretly committed, but in broad sunlight. Bands of these wretches, armed with knives and rifles, used to cross the Chatahoochie, and make inroads into Columbus; break into houses, rob, murder, ill-treat women, and then return in triumph to their dens, laden with booty, and laughing at the laws. It was useless to think of pursuing them, or of obtaining justice, for they were on Indian territory; and many of the chiefs were in league with them. At length General Jackson and the government took it up. The Indians were driven over the Mississippi, the outlaws and murderers fled, Sodoma itself disappeared; and, released from its troublesome neighbours, Columbus is now as flourishing a town as any in the west.

The recollections of their former life and exploits seemed highly interesting to the two

comrades; and their communications became more and more confidential. Johnny filled himself a glass, and the conversation soon increased in animation. I could understand little of what they said, for they spoke a sort of thieves' jargon. After a time, their voices sounded as a confused hum in my ears, the objects in the room became gradually less distinct, and I fell asleep.

I was roused, not very gently, by a mulatto woman, who poured a spoonful of tea into my mouth before I had well opened my eyes. She at first did not appear to be attending to me with any great degree of good-will; but by the time she had given me half a dozen spoonfuls, her womanly sympathy began to be awakened, and her manner became kinder. The tea did me an infinite deal of good, and seemed to infuse new life into my veins. I finished the cup, and the mulatto laid me down again on my pillow with far more gentleness than she had lifted me up.

"Gor! Gor!" cried she, "what poor young man! Berry weak. Him better soon. One hour, massa, good soup."

"Soup! What do you want with soup?" grumbled Johnny.

"Him take soup. I cook it," screamed the woman.

"Worse for you if she don't, Johnny," said Bob.

Johnny muttered something in reply, but I did not distinguish what it was, for my eyes closed, and I again fell asleep.

It seemed to me as if I had been five minutes slumbering, when the mulatto returned with the soup. The tea had revived me, but this gave me strength; and when I had taken it, I was able to sit up in my bed.

While the woman was feeding me, Bob was eating his beefsteak. It was a piece of meat that might have sufficed for six persons, but the man seemed as hungry as if he had eaten nothing for three days. He cut off wedges half as big as his fist, swallowed them with ravenous eagerness, and, instead of bread, bit into some unpeeled potatoes. All this was washed down with glass after glass of raw spirits, which had the effect of wakening him up, and infusing a certain degree of cheerfulness into his strange humour. He still spoke more to himself than to Johnny, but his recollections seemed agreeable; he nodded self-approvingly, and sometimes laughed aloud. At last he began to abuse Johnny for being, as he said, such a sneak-

ing, cowardly fellow—such a treacherous, false-hearted gallows-bird.

"It's true," said he, "I am gallows-bird enough myself, but then I'm open, and no man can say I'm a-lear'd; but Johnny, who"——

I do not know what he was about to say, for Johnny sprang towards him, and placed both hands over his mouth, receiving in return a blow that knocked him as far as the door, through which he retreated, cursing and grumbling.

I soon fell asleep again, and whilst in that state I had a confused sort of consciousness of various noises in the room, loud words, blows, and shouting. Wearied as I was, however, I believe no noise would have fully roused me, although hunger at last did.

When I opened my eyes I saw the mulatto woman sitting by my bed, and keeping off the mosquitoes. She brought me the remainder of the soup, and promised, if I would sleep a couple of hours more, to bring me a beef-steak. Before the two hours had elapsed I awoke, hungrier than ever. After I had eaten all the beefsteak the woman would allow me, which was a very moderate quantity, she brought me a beer-glass full of the most delicious punch I ever tasted. I asked her where she had got the rum and lemons, and she told me that it was she who had bought them, as well as a stock of coffee and tea; that Johnny was her partner, but that he had done nothing but build the house, and badly built it was. She then began to abuse Johnny, and said he was a gambler; and, worse still, that he had had plenty of money once, but had lost it all; that she had first known him in Lower Natchez, but he had been obliged to run away from there in the night to save his neck. Bob was no better, she said; on the contrary—and here she made the gesture of cutting a man's throat—he was a very bad fellow, she added. He had got drunk after his dinner, knocked Johnny down, and broken every thing. He was now lying asleep outside the door; and Johnny had hidden himself somewhere.

How long she continued speaking I know not, for I again fell into a deep sleep, which this time lasted six or seven hours.

I was awakened by a strong grasp laid upon my arm, which made me cry out, more, however, from surprise than pain. Bob stood by my bedside; the traces of the preceding night's debauch plainly written on his haggard countenance. His bloodshot eyes were inflamed and swollen, and rolled with even

more than their usual wildness; his mouth was open, and the jaws stiff and fixed; he looked as if he had just come from committing some frightful deed. I could fancy the first murderer to have worn such an aspect when gazing on the body of his slaughtered brother. I shrank back, horror-struck at his appearance.

"In God's name, man, what do you want?"

He made no answer.

"You are in a fever. You've the ague!"

"Ay, a fever," groaned he, shivering as he spoke; "a fever, but not the one you mean; a fever, young man, such as God keep you from ever having."

His whole frame shuddered while he uttered these words. There was a short pause.

"Curious that," continued he; "I've served more than one in the same way, but never thought of it afterwards—was forgotten in less than no time. Got to pay the whole score at once, I suppose. Can't rest a minute. In the open prairie it's the worst; there stands the old man, so plain, with his silver beard, and the spectre just behind him."

His eyes rolled, he clenched his fists, and, striking his forehead furiously, rushed out of the hut.

In a few minutes he returned, apparently more composed, and walked straight up to my bed.

"Stranger, you must do me a service," said he abruptly.

"Ten rather than one," replied I; "any thing that is in my power. Do I not owe you my life?"

"You're a gentleman, I see, and a Christian. You must come with me to the squire—the Alcalde."

"To the Alcalde, man! What must I go there for?"

"You'll see and hear when you get there; I've something to tell him—something for his own ear."

He drew a deep breath, and remained silent for a short time, gazing anxiously on all sides of him.

"Something," whispered he, "that nobody else must hear."

"But there's Johnny there. Why not take him?"

"Johnny!" cried he, with a scornful laugh; "Johnny! who's ten times worse than I am, bad as I be; and bad I am to be sure, but yet open and above board, always, till this time; but Johnny! he'd sell his own mother.

He's a cowardly, sneakin', treacherous hound, is Johnny."

It was unnecessary to tell me this, for Johnny's character was written plainly enough upon his countenance.

"But why do you want me to go to the Alcalde?"

"Why does one want people before the judge? He's a judge, man; a Mexican one certainly, but chosen by us Americans; and an American himself, as you and I are."

"And how soon must I go?"

"Directly. I can't bear it any longer. It leaves me no peace. Not an hour's rest have I had for the last eight days. When I go out into the prairie, the spectre stands before me and beckons me on; and if I try to go another way, he comes behind me and drives me before him under the Patriarch. I see him just as plainly as when he was alive, only paler and sadder. It seems as if I could touch him with my hand. Even the bottle is no use now; neither rum, nor whisky, nor brandy, rid me of him; it don't, by the 'tarnel.—Curious that! I got drunk yesterday—thought to get rid of him; but he came in the night and drove me out. I was obliged to go. Wouldn't let me sleep; was forced to go under the Patriarch."

"Under the Patriarch? the live oak?" cried I, in astonishment.—"Were you there in the night?"

"Ay, that was I," replied he, in the same horribly confidential tone; "and the spirit threatened me, and said I will leave you no peace, Bob, till you go to the Alcalde and tell him"—

"Then I will go with you to the Alcalde, and that immediately," said I, raising myself up in bed. I could not help pitying the poor fellow from my very soul.

"Where are you going?" croaked Johnny, who at this moment glided into the room. "Not a step shall you stir till you've paid."

"Johnny," said Bob, seizing his less powerful companion by the shoulders, lifting him up like a child, and then setting him down again with such force, that his knees cracked and bent under him;—"Johnny, this gentleman is my guest, d'ye understand? And here is the reckonin', and mind yourself, Johnny—mind yourself, that's all."

Johnny crept into a corner like a flogged hound; the mulatto woman, however, did not seem disposed to be so easily intimidated. Sticking her arms in her sides, she waddled boldly forward.

"You not take him 'way, Massa Bob?" screamed she. "Him stop here. Him berry weak—not able for ride—not able for stand on him foot."

This was true enough. Strong as I had felt in bed, I could hardly stand upright when I got out of it.

For a moment Bob seemed undecided, but only for one moment; then, stepping up to the mulatto, he lifted her, fat and heavy as she was, in the same manner as he had done her partner, at least a foot from the ground, and carried her screaming and struggling to the door, which he kicked open. Then setting her down outside, "Silence!" roared he, "and some good strong tea instead of your cursed chatter, and a fresh beefsteak instead of your stinking carcass. That will strengthen the gentleman; so be quick about it, you old brown-skinned beast, you!"

I had slept in my clothes, and my toilet was consequently soon made, by the help of a bowl of water and towel, which Bob made Johnny bring, and then ordered him to go and get our horses ready.

A hearty breakfast of tea, butter, Indian corn bread, and steaks, increased my strength so much, that I was able to mount my mustang. I had still pains in all my limbs, but we rode slowly; the morning was bright, the air fresh and elastic, and I felt myself getting gradually better. Our path lay through the prairie; the river fringed with wood, on the one hand; the vast ocean of grass, sprinkled with innumerable islands of trees, on the other. We saw abundance of game, which sprang up under the very feet of our horses; but although Bob had his rifle, he made no use of it. He muttered continually to himself, and seemed to be arranging what he should say to the judge; for I heard him talking of things which I would just as soon not have listened to, if I could have helped it. I was heartily glad when we at length reached the plantation of the Alcalde.

It seemed a very considerable one, and the size and appearance of the framework house bespoke comfort and every luxury. The building was surrounded by a group of China trees, which I should have thought about ten years of age, but which I afterwards learned had not been planted half that time, although they were already large enough to afford a very agreeable shade. Right in front of the house rose a live oak, inferior in size to the one in the prairie, but still of immense age and great beauty. To the left

were some two hundred acres of cotton fields, extending to the bank of the Jacinto, which at this spot made a sharp turn, and winding round the plantation, enclosed it on three sides. Before the house lay the prairie, with its archipelago of islands, and herds of grazing cattle and mustangs; to the right, more cotton fields; and in rear of the dwelling, the negro cottages and out-buildings. There was a Sabbath-like stillness pervading the whole scene, which seemed to strike even Bob. He paused as though in deep thought, and allowed his hand to rest for a moment on the handle of the lattice-door. Then with a sudden and resolute jerk, bespeaking an equally sudden resolution, he pushed open the gate, and we entered a garden planted with orange, banana, and citron trees, the path through which was enclosed between palisades, and led to a sort of front court, with another lattice-work door, beside which hung a bell. Upon ringing this, a negro appeared.

The black seemed to know Bob very well, for he nodded to him as to an old acquaintance, and said the squire wanted him, and had asked after him several times. He then led the way to a large parlour, very handsomely furnished for Texas, and in which we found the squire, or more properly speaking, the Alcalde, sitting smoking his cigar. He had just breakfasted, and the plates and dishes were still upon the table. He did not appear to be much given to compliments or ceremony, or to partake at all of the Yankee failing of curiosity, for he answered our salutation with a laconic "good-morning," and scarcely even looked at us. At the very first glance, it was easy to see that he came from Tennessee or Virginia, the only provinces in which one finds men of his gigantic mould. Even sitting, his head rose above those of the negro servants in waiting. Nor was his height alone remarkable; he had the true West-Virginian build; the enormous chest and shoulders, and herculean limbs, the massive features and sharp gray eyes; altogether an exterior well calculated to impose on the rough backwoodsmen with whom he had to deal.

I was tired with my ride, and took a chair. The squire apparently did not deem me worthy of notice, or else he reserved me for a later scrutiny; but he fixed a long, searching look upon Bob, who remained standing, with his head sunk on his breast.

The judge at last broke silence.



"So here you are again, Bob. It's long since we've seen you, and I thought you had clean forgotten us. Well, Bob, we shouldn't have broke our hearts, I reckon; for I hate gamblers—ay, that I do—worse than skunks. It's a vile thing is play, and has ruined many a man in this world, and the next. It's ruined you too, Bob.

Bob said nothing.

"You'd have been mighty useful here last week; there was plenty for you to do. My step-daughter arrived; but as you weren't to be found, we had to send to Joel to shoot us a buck and a couple of dozen snipes. Ah, Bob! one might still make a good citizen of you, if you'd only leave off that cursed play!"

Bob still remained silent.

"Now go into the kitchen and get some breakfast."

Bob neither answered nor moved.

"D'ye hear? Go into the kitchen and get something to eat. And, Ptoly"—added he to the negro—"tell Veny to give him a pint of rum."

"Don't want yer rum—ain't thirsty"—growled Bob—

"Very like, very like," said the judge, sharply. "Reckon you've taken too much already. Look as if you could swallow a wild cat, claws and all. And you," added he, turning to me—"What the devil are you at, Ptoly? Don't you see the man wants his breakfast? Where's the coffee? Or would you rather have tea?"

"Thank you, Alcalde, I have breakfasted already."

"Don't look as if. Ain't sick, are you? Where do you come from? What's happened to you? What are you doing with Bob?"

He looked keenly and searchingly at me, and then again at Bob. My appearance was certainly not very prepossessing, unshaven as I was, and with my clothes and linen soiled and torn. He was evidently considering what could be the motive of our visit, and what had brought me into Bob's society. The result of his physiognomical observations did not appear very favourable either to me or my companion. I hastened to explain.

"You shall hear how it was, judge. I am indebted to Bob for my life."

"Your life! Indebted to Bob for your life!" repeated the judge, shaking his head incredulously.

I related how I had lost my way in the prairie; been carried into the Jacinto by my horse; and how I inevitably should have been drowned but for Bob's aid.

"Indeed!" said the judge, when I had done speaking. "So, Bob saved your life! Well, I am glad of it, Bob, very glad of it. Ah! if you could only keep away from that Johnny. I tell you, Bob, Johnny will be the ruin of you. Better keep out of his way."

"It's too late," answered Bob.

"Don't know why it should be. Never too late to leave a debauched, sinful life; never, man!"

"Calkilate it is, though," replied Bob, sullenly.

"You calculate it is?" said the judge, fixing his eyes on him. "And why do you calculate that? Take a glass—Ptoly, a glass—and tell me, man, why should it be too late?"

"I ain't thirsty, squire," said Bob.

"Don't talk to me of your thirst; rum's not for thirst, but to strengthen the heart and nerves, to drive away the blue devils. And a good thing it is, taken in moderation."

As he spoke he filled himself a glass, and drank half of it off. Bob shook his head.

"No rum for me, squire. I take no pleasure in it. I've something on my mind too heavy for rum to wash away."

"And what is that, Bob? Come, let's hear what you have to say. Or, perhaps, you'd rather speak to me alone. It's Sunday to-day, and no business ought to be done; but for once, and for you, we'll make an exception."

"I brought the gentleman with me on purpose to witness what I had to say," answered Bob, taking a cigar out of a box that stood on the table, and lighting it. He smoked a whiff or two, looked thoughtfully at the judge, and then threw the cigar through the open window.

"I don't relish, squire; nothin' does now."

"Ah, Bob! if you'd leave off play and drink! They're your ruin; worse than ague or fever."

"It's no use," continued Bob, as if he did not hear the judge's remark; it must out. I so't agin it, and thought to drive it away, but it cant be done. I've put a bit of lead into several before now, but this one"—

"What's that?" cried the judge, chucking

his cigar away, and looking sternly at Bob. "What's up now? What are you saying about a bit of lead? None of your Sodoma and Lower Natchez tricks, I hope? They won't do here. Don't understand such jokes."

"Pooh! they don't understand them a bit more in Natchez. If they did, I shouldn't be in Texas."

"The less said of that the better, Bob. You promised to lead a new life here; so we won't rake up old stories."

"I did, I did!" groaned Bob; "but it's all no use. I shall never be better till I'm hung."

I stared at the man in astonishment. The judge, however, took another cigar, lighted it, and, after puffing out a cloud of smoke, said, very unconcernedly—

"Not better till you're hung! What do you want to be hung for? To be sure, you should have been long ago, if the Georgia and Alabama papers don't lie. But we are not in the States here, but in Texas, under Mexican laws. It's nothing to us what you've done yonder. Where there is no accuser there can be no judge."

"Send away the nigger, squire," said Bob. "What a free white man has to say, shouldn't be heard by black ears."

"Go away, Ptoiy," said the judge. "Now, then," added he, turning to Bob, "say what you have to say; but mind, nobody forces you to do it, and it's only out of good will that I listen to you, for to-day's Sunday."

"I know that," muttered Bob; "I know that, squire; but it leaves me no peace, and it must out. I've been to San Felipe de Austin, to Anahuac, every where, but it's all no use. Wherever I go, the spectre follows me, and drives me back under the cursed Patriarch."

"Under the Patriarch!" exclaimed the judge.

"Ay, under the Patriarch!" groaned Bob. "Don't you know the Patriarch; the old live oak near the ford, on the Jacinto?"

"I know, I know!" answered the judge. "And what drives you under the Patriarch?"

"What drives me? What drives a man who—who?"

"A man who"—repeated the judge, gently.

"A man," continued Bob, in the same low tone, "who has sent a rifle bullet into another's heart. He lies there, under the Patriarch, whom I"—

"Whom you?" asked the judge.

"*Whom I killed!*" said Bob, in a hollow whisper.

"Killed!" exclaimed the judge. "You killed him? Whom?"

"Ah! whom? Why don't you let me speak? You always interrupt me with your palaver," growled Bob.

"You are getting saucy, Bob," said the judge impatiently. "Go on, however. I reckon it's only one of your usual tantrums."

Bob shook his head. The judge looked keenly at him for a moment, and then resumed in a sort of confidential, encouraging tone.

"Under the Patriarch; and how did he come under the Patriarch?"

"I dragged him there, and buried him there," replied Bob.

"Dragged him there! Why did you drag him there?"

"Because he couldn't go himself, with more than half an ounce of lead in his body."

"And you put the half ounce of lead into him, Bob? Well, if it was Johnny, you've done the country a service, and saved it a rope."

Bob shook his head negatively.

"It wasn't Johnny, although—But you shall hear all about it. It's just ten days since you paid me twenty dollars fifty."

"I did so, Bob; twenty dollars fifty cents; and I advised you at the same time to let the money lie till you had a couple of hundred dollars, or enough to buy a quarter or an eighth of Sitio land; but advice is thrown away upon you."

"When I got the money, I thought I'd go down to San Felipe, to the Mexicans, and try my luck; and, at the same time, see the doctor about my fever. As I was goin' there, I passed near Johnny's house, and fancied a glass, but determined not to get off my horse. I rode up to the window, and looked in. There was a man sittin' at the table, havin' a hearty good dinner of steaks and potatoes, and washin' it down with a stiff glass of grog. I began to feel hungry myself, and while I was considerin' whether I should 'light or not, Johnny came sneakin' out, and whispered to me to come in, that there was a man inside with whom somethin' might be done if we went the right way to work; a man who had a leather belt round his waist cram-full of hard Jackson; and that, if we got out the cards and pretended to play a little together, he would soon take the bait and join us.

"I wasn't much inclined to do it," continued Bob; "but Johnny bothered me so to go in, that I got off my horse. As I did so the dollars chinked in my pocket, and the sound gave me a wish to play.

"I went in; and Johnny fetched the whiskey bottle. One glass followed another. There were beefsteaks and potatoes too, but I only eat a couple of mouthfuls. When I had drank two, three, ay, four glasses, Johnny brought the cards and dice. 'Hallo, Johnny!' says I; 'cards and dice, Johnny! I've twenty dollars fifty in my pocket. Let's have a game! But no more drink for me; for I know you, Johnny, I know you' —

"Johnny larfed slyly, and rattled the dice, and we sat down to play. I hadn't meant to drink any more, but play makes me thirsty; and with every glass I got more eager, and my dollars got fewer. I reckoned, however, that the stranger would join us, and that I should be able to win back from him; but not a bit of it: he sat quite quiet, and eat and drank as if he didn't see we were there. I went on playin' madder than ever, and before half an hour was over, I was cleaned out; my twenty dollars fifty gone to the devil, or what's the same thing, into Johnny's pocket.

"When I found myself without a cent, I was mad, I reckon. It warn't the first time, nor the hundredth, that I had lost money. Many bigger sums than that—ay, hundreds and thousands of dollars had I played away—but they had none of them cost me the hundredth or thousandth part of the trouble to get that these twenty dollars fifty had; two full months had I been slavin' away in the woods and prairies to airn them, and I caught the fever there. The fever I had still, but no money to cure it with. Johnny only larfed in my face, and rattled my dollars. I made a hit at him, which, if he hadn't jumped on one side, would have cured him of larfin' for a week or two.

"Presently, however, he came sneakin' up to me, and winkin' and whisperin'; and, 'Bob!' says he, 'is it come to that with you? are you grown so chicken-hearted that you don't see the beltful of money round his body?' said he, lookin' at it. 'No end of hard coin, I guess; and all to be had for little more than half an ounce of lead.' "

"Did he say that?" asked the judge.

"Ay, that he did, but I wouldn't listen to him. I was mad with him for winnin' my twenty dollars; and I told him that, if he

wanted the stranger's purse, he might take it himself, and be d——d; that I wasn't goin' to pull the hot chestnuts out of the fire for him. And I got on my horse, and rode away like mad.

"My head spun round like a mill. I couldn't get over my loss. I took the twenty dollars fifty more to heart than any money I had ever gambled. I didn't know where to go. I didn't dare to go back to you, for I knew you'd scold me."

"I shouldn't have scolded you, Bob; or, if I had, it would only have been for your good. I should have summoned Johnny before me, called together a jury of twelve of the neighbours, got you back your twenty dollars fifty, and sent Johnny out of the country; or, better still, out of the world."

These words were spoken with much phlegm, but yet with a degree of feeling and sympathy, which greatly improved my opinion of the worthy judge. Bob also seemed touched. He drew a deep sigh, and gazed at the Alcalde with a melancholy look.

"It's too late," muttered he; "too late, squire."

"Perhaps not," replied the judge, "but let's hear the rest."

"Well," continued Bob, "I kept riding on at random, and when evenin' came I found myself near the palmetta field on the bank of the Jacinto. As I was ridin' past it, I heard all at once the tramp of a horse. At that moment the queerest feelin' I ever had came over me; a sort of cold shiverin' feel. I forgot where I was; sight and hearin' left me; I could only see two things, my twenty dollars fifty, and the well-filled belt of the stranger I had left at Johnny's. Just then a voice called to me.

"'Whence come, countryman, and whither going?' it said.

"'Whence and whither,' answered I, as surly as could be; 'to the devil at a gallop, and you'd better ride on and tell him I'm comin'.'

"'You can do the errand yourself,' answered the stranger larfin'; 'my road don't lie that way.'

"As he spoke, I looked round, and saw, what I was pretty sure of before, that it was the man with the belt full of money.

"'Ain't you the stranger I see'd in the inn yonder?' asked he.

"'And if I am,' says I; 'what's that to you?'

"'Nothin',' said he; 'nothin', certainly.'

"'Better ride on,' says I; 'and leave me quiet.'

"'Will so, stranger; but you needn't take it so mighty unkind. A word ain't a to-mahawk, I reckon,' said he. 'But I rayther expect your losin's at play ain't put you in a very church-goin' humour; and, if I was you, I'd keep my dollars in my pocket, and not set them on cards and dice.'

"'This put me in a rile to hear him cast my losin's in my teeth that way.

"'You're a nice feller,' said I, 'to throw a man's losses in his face. A pitiful chap you are,' says I.

"'I thought to provoke him, and that he'd tackle me. But he seemed to have no fancy for a fight, for he said quite humble like—

"'I throw nothin' in your face; God forbid that I should reproach you with your losses! I'm sorry for you, on the contrary. Don't look like a man who can afford to lose his dollars. Seem to me one who airns his money by hard work.'

"'We were just then halted at the further end of the cane brake, close to the trees that border the Jacinto. I had turned my horse, and was frontin' the stranger. And all the time the devil was busy whisperin' to me, and pointin' to the belt round the man's waist. I could see where it was, plain enough, though he had buttoned his coat over it.

"'Hard work, indeed,' says I; 'and now I've lost every thing; not a cent left for a quid of baccy.'

"'If that's all,' says he; 'there's a help for that. I don't chew myself, and I ain't a rich man; I've wife and children, and want every cent I've got, but it's one's duty to help a countryman. You shall have money for tobacco and a dram.'

"'And so sayin', he took a purse out of his pocket, in which he carried his change. It was pretty full; there may have been some twenty dollars in it; and as he drew the string, it was as if the devil laughed and nodded to me out of the openin' of the purse.

"'Halves!' cried I.

"'No, not that,' says he; 'I've wife and child, and what I have belongs to them; but half a dollar'—

"'Halves!' cried I again; 'or else'—

"'Or else?' repeated he; and, as he spoke, he put the purse back into his pocket, and held hold of the rifle which was slung on his shoulder.

"'Don't force one to do you a mischief,' said he. 'Don't,' says he; 'we might both

be sorry for it. What you're thinking of brings no blessin'.'

"'I was past seein' or hearin'. A thousand devils from hell were possessin' me.

"'Halves!' I yelled out; and, as I said the word, he sprang out of the saddle, and fell back over his horse's crupper to the ground.

"'I'm a dead man!' cried he; as well as the rattle in his throat would let him. 'God be merciful to me! My poor wife, my poor children!'

Bob paused; he gasped for breath, and the sweat stood in large drops upon his forehead. He gazed wildly round the room. The judge himself looked very pale. I tried to rise but sank back in my chair. Without the table I believe I should have fallen to the ground.

There was a gloomy pause of some moment's duration. At last the judge broke silence.

"'A hard, hard case!' said he. 'Father, mother, children, all at one blow. Bob, you are a bad fellow, a very bad fellow; a great villain!'

"'A great villain,' groaned Bob. 'The ball was gone right through his breast.'

"'Perhaps your gun went off by accident,' said the judge anxiously. 'Perhaps it was his own ball.'

"'I see him now, judge, as plain as can be, when he said, 'Don't force me to do you a mischief. We might both be sorry for it.' But I pulled the trigger. His bullet is still in his rife.

"'When I saw him lie dead before me, I can't tell you what I felt. It warn't the first I had sent to his account; but yet I would have given all the purses and money in the world to have had him alive again. I must have dragged him under the Patriarch and dug a grave with my huntin' knife; for I found him there afterwards.'

"'You found him there?' repeated the judge.

"'Yes. I don't know how he came there. I must have brought him, but I recollect nothin' about it.'

The judge had risen from his chair, and was walking up and down the room, apparently in deep thought. Suddenly he stopped short.

"'What have you done with his money?'

"'I took his purse, but buried his belt with him, as well as a flask of rum, and some bread and beef he had brought away from Johnny's. I set out for San Felipe, and rode

the whole day. In the evenin', when I looked about me, expectin' to see the town, where do you think I was?"

The judge and I stared at him.

"Under the Patriarch. The ghost of the murdered man had driven me there. I had no peace till I'd dug him up and buried him again. Next day I set off in another direction. I was out of tobacco, and I started across the prairie to Anahuac. Lord, what a day I passed! Wherever I went, *he* stood before me. If I turned, *he* turned too. Sometimes he came behind me, and looked over my shoulder. I spurred my mustang till the blood came, hopin' to get away from him, but it was all no use. I thought when I got to Anahuac I should be quit of him, and I galloped on as if for life or death. But in the evenin', instead of bein' close to the salt-works as I expected, there I was agin, under the Patriarch. I dug him up a second time, and sat and stared at him, and then buried him agin."

"Queer that," observed the judge.

"Ay, very queer!" said Bob, mournfully. "But it's all no use. Nothin' does me any good. I sha'n't be better—I shall never have peace till I'm hung."

Bob evidently felt relieved now; he had in a manner passed sentence on himself. Strange as it may appear, I had a similar feeling, and could not help nodding my head approvingly. The judge alone preserved an unmoved countenance.

"Indeed!" said he, "indeed! You think you'll be no better till you're hung."

"Yes," answered Bob, with eager haste. "hung on the same tree under which *he* lies buried."

Well, if you will have it so, we'll see what can be done for you. We'll call a jury of the neighbours together to-morrow."

"Thank ye, squire," murmured Bob, visibly comforted by this promise.

"We'll summon a jury," repeated the Alcalde, "and see what can be done for you. You'll perhaps have changed your mind by that time."

I stared at him like one fallen from the clouds, but he did not seem to notice my surprise.

"There is, perhaps, another way to get rid of your life if you are tired of it," he continued. "We might, perhaps, hit upon one that would satisfy your conscience."

Bob shook his head. I involuntarily made the same movement.

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"At any rate, we'll hear what the neighbours say," added the judge.

Bob stepped up to the judge, and held out his hand to bid him farewell. The other did not take it, and turning to me, said—"You had better stop here, I think."

Bob turned round impetuously.

"The gentleman must come with me."

"Why must he?" said the judge.

"Ask himself."

I again explained the obligations I was under to Bob; how we had fallen in with one another; and what care and attention he had shown me at Johnny's.

The judge nodded approvingly. "Nevertheless," said he, "you will remain here, and Bob will go alone. You are in a state of mind, Bob, in which a man is better alone, d'ye see; and so leave the young man here. Another misfortune might happen; and, at any rate, he's better here than at Johnny's. Come back to-morrow, and we'll see what can be done for you."

These words were spoken in a decided manner, which seemed to have its effect upon Bob. He nodded assentingly, and left the room. I remained staring at the judge, and lost in wonder at these strange proceedings.

When Bob was gone, the Alcalde gave a blast on a shell, which supplied the place of a bell. Then seizing the cigar box, he tried one cigar after another, broke them peevishly up, and threw the pieces out of the window. The negro whom the shell had summoned, stood for some time waiting, while his master broke up the cigars, and threw them away. At last the judge's patience seemed quite to leave him.

"Hark ye, Ptoly!" growled he to the frightened black, "the next time you bring me cigars that neither draw nor smoke, I'll make your back smoke for it. Mind that, now;—there's not a single one of them worth a rotten maize stalk. Tell that old coffee-coloured hag of Johnny's, that I'll have no more of her cigars. Ride over to Mr. Ducie's and fetch a box. And, d'ye hear? tell him I want to speak a word with him and the neighbours. Ask him to bring the neighbours with him to-morrow morning. And mind you're home again by two o'clock. Take the mustang we caught last week; I want to see how he goes."

The negro listened to these various commands with open mouth and staring eyes, then giving a perplexed look at his master, shot out of the room."

"Where away, Ptoly?" shouted the Alcalde after him.

"To Massa Ducie."

"Without a pass, Ptoly? And what are you going to say to Mr. Ducie?"

"Him nebbber send bad cigar again, him coffee-cullud hag. Massa speak to Johnny and neighbours. Johnny bring neighbours here."

"I thought as much," said the judge with perfect equanimity. "Wait a minute, I'll write the pass, and a couple of lines for Mr. Ducie."

This was soon done, and the negro despatched on his errand. The judge waited till he heard the sound of his horse's feet galloping away, and then, laying hold of the box of despised cigars, lit the first which came to hand. It smoked capitally, as did also one that I took. They were Principes, and as good as I ever tasted.

I passed the whole of that day *tête-à-tête* with the judge, who, I soon found, knew various friends of mine in the States. I told him the circumstances under which I had come to Texas, and the intention I had of settling there, should I find the country to my liking. During our long conversation, I was able to form a very different, and much more favourable estimate of his character, than I had done from his interview with Bob. He was the very man to be useful to a new country; of great energy, sound judgment, enlarged and liberal views. He gave me some curious information as to the state of things in Texas; and did not think it necessary to conceal from me, as an American, and one who intended settling in the country, that there was a plan in agitation for throwing off the Mexican yoke, and declaring Texas an independent republic.

Although the project was as yet not quite ripe for execution, it was discussed freely and openly by the American settlers. "It is the interest of every man to keep it secret," said the judge; "and there can be nothing to induce even the worst amongst us to betray a cause, by the success of which he is sure to profit. We have many bad characters in Texas, the offscourings of the United States, men like Bob, or far worse than him; but debauched, gambling, drunken villains though they be, they are the men we want when it comes to a struggle; and when that time arrives, they will all be found ready to put their shoulders to the wheel, use knife and rifle, and shed the last drop of their

blood in defence of their fellow-citizens and of the new and independent republic of Texas. At this moment, we must wink at many things which would be severely punished in an older and more settled country; each man's arm is of immense value to the State; for, on the day of battle, we shall have, not two to one, but twenty to one opposed to us."

I was awakened the following morning by the sound of a horse's feet; and, looking out of the window, saw Bob dismounting from his mustang. The last twenty-four hours had told fearfully upon him. His limbs seemed powerless, and he reeled and staggered in such a manner, that I at first thought him intoxicated. But such was not the case. His was the deadly weariness caused by mental anguish. He looked like one just taken off the rack.

Hastily pulling on my clothes, I hurried down stairs, and opened the house door. Bob stood with his head resting on his horse's neck, and his hands crossed, shivering and groaning. When I spoke to him, he looked up, but did not seem to know me. I tied his horse to a post, and taking his hand, led him into the house. He followed like a child, apparently without the will or the power to resist; and when I placed him a chair, he fell into it with a weight that made it crack under him, and shook the house. I could not get him to speak, and was about to return to my room to complete my toilet, when I again heard the tramp of mustangs. This was a party of half a dozen horsemen, all dressed in hunting shirts over buckskin breeches and jackets, and armed with rifles and bowie-knives; stout, daring looking fellows, evidently from the south-western states, with the true Kentucky half horse half alligator profile, and the usual allowance of thunder, lightning, and earthquake. It struck me when I saw them, that two or three thousand such men would have small difficulty in dealing with a whole army of Mexicans, if the latter were all of the pigmy, spindle-shanked breed I had seen on first landing. These giants could easily have walked away with a Mexican in each hand.

They jumped off their horses, and threw the bridles to the negroes in the usual Kentuckian devil-may-care style, and then walked into the house with the air of people who make themselves at home every where. On entering the parlour, they nodded a "good-morning" to me, rather coldly to be sure, for they had seen me talking with Bob, which

probably did not much recommend me. Presently, four more horsemen rode up, and then a third party, so that there were now fourteen of them assembled, all decided-looking men, in the prime of life and strength. The judge, who slept in an adjoining room, had been awakened by the noise. I heard him jump out of bed, and not three minutes elapsed before he entered the parlour.

After he had shaken hands with all his visitors, he presented me to them, and I found that I was in the presence of no less important persons than the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin; and that two of my worthy countrymen were *corregidores*, one a *procurador*, and the others *buenos hombres*, or freeholders. They did not seem, however, to prize their titles much, for they addressed one another by their surnames only.

The negro brought a light, opened the cigar box, and arranged the chairs; the judge pointed to the sideboard, and to the cigars, and then sat down. Some took a dram, others lit a cigar.

Several minutes elapsed, during which the men sat in perfect silence, as if they were collecting their thoughts, or, as though it were undignified to show any haste or impatience to speak. This grave sort of deliberation, which is met with among certain classes, and in certain provinces of the Union, has often struck me as a curious feature of our national character. It partakes of the stoical dignity of the Indian at his council fire, and of the stern, religious gravity of the early puritan settlers in America.

During this pause Bob was writhing on his chair like a worm, his face concealed by his hands, his elbows on his knees. At last, when all had drank and smoked, the judge laid down his cigar.

"Men!" said he.

"Squire!" answered they.

"We've a business before us, which I calculate will be best explained by him whom it concerns."

The men looked at the squire, then at Bob, then at me.

"Bob Rock! or whatever your name may be, if you have aught to say, say it!" continued the judge.

"Said it all yesterday," muttered Bob, his face still covered by his hands.

"Yes, but you must say it again to-day. Yesterday was Sunday, and Sunday is a day of rest, and not of business. I will neither judge you, nor allow you to be judged, by

what you said yesterday. Besides, it was all between ourselves, for I don't reckon Mr. Rivers as any thing; I count him still as a stranger."

"What's the use of so much palaver, when the thing's plain enough?" said Bob peevishly, raising his head as he spoke.

The men stared at him in grave astonishment. He was really frightful to behold; his face of a sort of blue tint; his cheeks hollow; his beard wild and ragged; his blood-shot eyes rolling, and deep sunk in their sockets. His appearance was scarcely human.

"I tell you again," said the judge, "I will condemn no man upon his own word alone; much less you, who have been in my service, and eaten of my bread. You accused yourself yesterday, but you were delirious at the time—you had the fever upon you."

"It's no use, squire," said Bob, apparently touched by the kindness, of the judge. "You mean well, I see; but though you might deliver me out of men's hands, you couldn't rescue me from myself. Its no use—I must be hung—hung on the same tree under which the man I killed lies buried."

The men, or the jurors, as I may call them looked at one another, but said nothing.

"It's no use," again cried Bob, in a shrill agonized tone. "If he had attacked me, or only threatened me; but no, he didn't do it. I hear his words still, when he said, 'Do it not man! I've wife and child. What you intend, brings no blessing on the doer.' But I heard nothin' then except the voice of the devil; I brought the rifle down—levelled—fired."

The man's agony was so intense, that even the iron-featured jury seemed moved by it. They cast sharp, but stolen glances at Bob. There was a short silence.

"So you have killed a man?" said a deep bass voice at last.

"Ay, that have I!" gasped Bob.

"And how came that?" continued his questioner.

"How it came? You must ask the devil, or Johnny. No, not Johnny, he can tell you nothing; he was not there. No one can tell you but me; and I hardly know how it was. The man was at Johnny's, and Johnny showed me his belt full of money."

"Johnny!" exclaimed several of the jury.

"Ay Johnny! He reckoned on winning

it from him, but the man was too cautious for that; and when Johnny had plucked all my feathers, won my twenty dollars fifty"——

"Twenty dollars fifty cents," interposed the judge, "which I paid him for catching mustangs and shooting game."

The men nodded.

"And then because he wouldn't play, you shot him?" asked the same deep toned voice as before.

"No—some hours after—by the Jacinto, near the Patriarch—met him down there, and killed him."

"Thought there was something out o' the common thereaway," said one of the jury; "for as we rode by the tree a whole nation of kites and turkey buzzards flew out. Didn't they, Mr. Heart?"

Mr. Heart nodded.

"Met him by the river, and cried, halves of his money," continued Bob mechanically. "He said he'd give me something to buy a quid, and more than enough for that, but not halves. 'I've wife and child,' said he"——

"And you?" asked the juror with the deep voice, which this time, however, had a hollow sound in it.

"Shot him down," said Bob with a wild hoarse laugh.

For some time no word was spoken.

"And who was the man?" said a juror at last.

"Didn't ask him; and it warn't written on his face. He was from the States; but whether a hosiery, or a buckeye, or a mud-head, is more than I can say."

"The thing must be investigated, *Alcalde*," said another of the jury after a second pause.

"It must so," answered the *Alcalde*.

"What's the good of so much investigation?" grumbled Bob.

"What good?" repeated the *Alcalde*.

"Because we owe it to ourselves, to the dead man, and to you, not to sentence you without having held an inquest on the body. There's another thing which I must call your attention to," continued he, turning to the jury; "the man is half out of his mind—not *compos mentis*, as they say. He's got the fever, and had it when he did the deed; he was urged on by Johnny, and maddened by his losses at play. In spite of his wild excitement, however, he saved that gentleman's life yonder, Mr. Edward Nathaniel Rivers."

"Did he so?" said one of the jury.

"That did he," replied I, "not only by saving me from drowning when my horse dragged me, half dead and helpless, into the river, but also by the care and attention he forced Johnny and his mulatto to bestow upon me. Without him I should not be alive at this moment."

Bob gave me a look which went to my heart. The tears were standing in his eyes. The jury heard me in deep silence.

"It seems that Johnny led you on and excited you to this?" said one of the jurors.

"I didn't say that. I only said that he pointed to the man's money bag, and said——But what is it to you what Johnny said? I'm the man who did it. I speak for myself, and I'll be hanged for myself."

"All very good, Bob," interposed the *Alcalde*; but we can't hang you without being sure you deserve it. What do you say to it, Mr. Whyte? You're the procurador—and you, Mr. Heart and Mr. Stone? Help yourselves to rum or brandy; and Mr. Bright and Irwin, take another cigar. They're considerable tolerable the cigars—aint they? That's brandy, Mr. Whyte, in the diamond bottle."

Mr. Whyte had got up to give his opinion, as I thought; but I was mistaken. He stepped to the sideboard, took up a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, every movement being performed with the greatest deliberation.

"Well, squire," said he, "or rather *Alcalde*"——

After the word *Alcalde*, he filled the glass half full of rum.

"If it's as we've heard," added he, pouring about a spoonful of water on the rum, "and Bob has killed the man"—he continued, throwing in some lumps of sugar—"murdered him"—he went on crushing the sugar with a wooden stamp—"I rather calculate"—here he raised the glass—"Bob ought to be hung," he concluded, putting the tumbler to his mouth and emptying it.

The jurors nodded in silence. Bob drew a deep breath, as if a load were taken off his breast.

"Well," said the judge, who did not look over well pleased; if you all think so, and Bob is agreed, I calculate we must do as he wishes. I tell you, though, I don't do it willingly. At any rate we must find the dead man first, and examine Johnny. We owe that to ourselves and to Bob."



"Certainly," said the jury with one voice.

"You are a dreadful murderer, Bob, a mighty considerable one," continued the judge; "but I tell you to your face, and not to flatter you, there is more good in your little finger than in Johnny's whole hide. And I'm sorry for you, because, at the bottom, you are not a bad man, though you've been led away by bad company and example. I calculate you might still be reformed, and made very useful—more so, perhaps, than you think. Your rifle's a capital good one."

At these last words the men all looked up, and threw a keen inquiring glance at Bob.

"You might be of great service," continued the judge encouragingly, "to the country and to your fellow citizens. You're worth a dozen Mexicans any day."

While the judge was speaking, Bob let his head fall on his breast, and seemed reflecting. He now looked up.

"I understand, squire; I see what your drivin' at. But I can't do it—I can't wait so long. My life's a burden and a sufferin' to me. Wherever I go, by day or by night, he's always there, standin' before me, and drivin' me under the Patriarch."

There was a pause of some duration. The judge resumed.

"So be it, then," said he with a sort of suppressed sigh. "We'll see the body to-day, Bob, and you may come to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"Couldn't it be sooner?" asked Bob impatiently.

"Why sooner? Are you in such a hurry?" asked Mr. Heart.

"What's the use of palaverin?" said Bob sulkily. "I told you already I'm sick of my life. If you don't come till ten o'clock, by the time you've had your talk out and ridden to the Patriarch, the fever 'll be upon me."

"But we can't be flying about like a parcel of wild geese, because of your fever," said the procurador.

"Certainly not," said Bob humbly.

"It's an ugly customer the fever, though, Mr. Whyte," observed Mr. Trace; "and I calculate we ought to do him that pleasure. What do you think, squire?"

"I reckon he's rather indiscreet in his askin's," said the judge, in a tone of vexation. "However, as he wishes it, and if it is agreeable to you," added he, turning to

the Ayuntamiento; "and as it's you, Bob, I calculate we must do what you ask."

"Thankee," said Bob.

"Nothing to thank for," growled the judge. "And now go into the kitchen and get a good meal of roast beef, d'ye hear?" He knocked upon the table. "Some good roast beef for Bob," said he to a negress who entered; "and see that he eats it. And get yourself dressed more decently, Bob—like a white man and a Christian, not like a wild redskin."

The negress and Bob left the room. The conversation now turned upon Johnny, who appeared, from all accounts, to be a very bad and dangerous fellow; and after a short discussion, they agreed to lynch him, in backwoodsman's phrase, just as coolly as if they had been talking of catching a mustang. When the men had come to this satisfactory conclusion, they got up, drank the judge's health and mine, shook us by the hand, and left the room and the house.

The day passed more heavily than the preceding one. I was too much engrossed with the strange scene I had witnessed to talk much. The judge, too, was in a very bad humour. He was vexed that a man should be hung who might render the country much and good service if he remained alive. That Johnny, the miserable, cowardly, treacherous Johnny, should be sent out of the world as quickly as possible, was perfectly correct, but with Bob it was very different. In vain did I remind him of the crime of which Bob had been guilty—of the outraged laws of God and man—and of the atonement due. It was no use. If Bob had sinned against society, he could repair his fault much better by remaining alive than by being hung; and for any thing else, God would avenge it in his own good time. We parted for the night, neither of us convinced by the other's arguments.

We were setting at breakfast the next morning, when a man, dressed in black, rode up to the door. It was Bob, but so metamorphosed that I scarcely knew him. Instead of the torn and bloodstained handkerchief round his head, he wore a hat; instead of the leathern jacket, a decent cloth coat. He had shaved off his beard, too, and looked quite another man. His manner had altered with his dress; he seemed tranquil and resigned. With a mild and submissive look, he held out his hand to the judge, who took and shook it heartily.

"Ah, Bob!" said he, "if you had only listened to what I had so often told you! I had those clothes brought on purpose from New Orleans, in order that, on Sundays at least, you might look like a decent and respectable man. How often have I asked you to put them on, and come with us to meeting, to hear Mr. Bliss preach? There is some truth in the saying, that the coat makes the man. With his Sunday coat, a man often puts on other and better thoughts. If that had been your case only fifty-two times in the year, you'd have learned to avoid Johnny before now."

Bob said nothing.

"Well, well! I've done all I could to make a better man of you. All that was in my power."

"That you have," answered Bob, much moved. "God reward you for it!"

I could not help holding out my hand to the worthy judge; and as I did so I thought I saw a moistness in his eye, which he suppressed, however, and, turning to the breakfast table, bade us sit down. Bob thanked him humbly, but declined, saying that he wished to appear fasting before his offended Creator. The judge insisted, and reasoned with him, and at last he took a chair.

Before we had done breakfast our friends of the preceding day began to drop in, and some of them joined us at the meal. When they had all taken what they chose, the judge ordered the negroes to clear away, and leave the room. This done, he seated himself at the upper end of the table, with the Ayuntamiento on either side, and Bob facing him.

"Mr. Whyte," said the Alcalde, "have you, as procurador, any thing to state?"

"Yes, Alcalde," replied the procurador. "In virtue of my office, I made a search in the place mentioned by Bob Rock, and there found the body of a man who had met his death by a gunshot wound. I also found a belt full of money, and several letters of recommendation to different planters, from which it appears that the man was on his way from Illinois to San Felipe, in order to buy land of Colonel Austin, and to settle in Texas."

The procurador then produced a pair of saddle-bags, out of which he took a leathern belt stuffed with money, which he laid on the table, together with the letters. The judge opened the belt, and counted the money. It amounted to upwards of five hundred dollars,

in gold and silver. The procurador then read the letters.

One of the corregidores now announced that Johnny and his mulatto had left their house and fled. He, the corregidor, had sent people in pursuit of them; but as yet there were no tidings of their capture. This piece of intelligence seemed to vex the judge greatly, but he made no remark on it at the time.

"Bob Rock!"

Bob stepped forward.

"Bob Rock, or by whatever other name you may be known, are you guilty or not guilty of this man's death?"

"Guilty!" replied Bob, in a low tone.

"Gentlemen of the jury, will you be pleased to give your verdict?"

The jury left the room. In ten minutes they returned.

"Guilty!" said the foreman.

"Bob Rock," said the judge solemnly, "your fellow-citizens have found you guilty; and I pronounce the sentence—that you be hung by the neck until you are dead. The Lord be merciful to your soul!"

"Amen!" said all present.

"Thank ye," murmured Bob.

"We will seal up the property of the deceased," said the judge, "and then proceed to our painful duty."

He called for a light, and he and the procurador and corregidores sealed up the papers and money.

"Has any one aught to allege why the sentence should not be put in execution?" said the Alcalde, with a glance at me.

"He saved my life, judge and fellow-citizens," cried I, deeply moved.

Bob shook his head mournfully.

"Let us go, then, in God's name," said the judge.

Without another word being spoken, we left the house and mounted our horses. The judge had brought a Bible with him; and he rode on, a little in front, with Bob, doing his best to prepare him for the eternity to which he was hastening. Bob listened attentively for some time; but at last he seemed to get impatient, and pushed his mustang into so fast a trot, that for a moment we suspected him of wishing to escape the doom he had so eagerly sought. But it was only that he feared the fever might return before the expiration of the short time he had to live.

After an hour's ride, we came to the enormous live oak distinguished as *the Patriarch*. Two or three of the men dismounted

and held aside the moss-covered branches which swept the ground, and formed a complete curtain round the tree. The party rode through the opening thus made, and drew up in a circle beneath the huge leafy dome. In the centre of this ring stood Bob, trembling like an aspen-leaf, and with his eyes fixed on a small mound of fresh earth, partly concealed by the branches, and which had escaped my notice on my former visit to the tree. It was the grave of the murdered man.

A magnificent burial place was that: no poet could have dreamt or desired a better. Above, the huge vault, with its natural frettings and arches; below, the greenest, freshest grass; around, an eternal half light, streaked and varied, and radiant as a rainbow. It was imposingly beautiful.

Bob, the judge, and the corregidores, remained sitting on their horses, but several of the other men dismounted. One of the latter cut the lasso from Bob's saddle, and threw an end of it over one of the lowermost branches; then uniting the two ends, formed them into a strong noose, which he left dangling from the bough. This simple preparation completed, the Alcalde took off his hat and folded his hands. The others followed his example.

"Bob!" said the judge to the unfortunate criminal, whose head was bowed on his horse's mane; "Bob! we will pray for your poor soul, which is about to part from your sinful body."

Bob raised his head. "I had something to say," exclaimed he, in a wondering and husky tone. "Something I wanted to say."

"What have you to say?"

Bob stared around him; his lips moved, but no word escaped him. His spirit was evidently no longer with things of this earth;

"Bob!" said the judge again, "we will pray for your soul."

"Pray! pray!" groaned he. "I shall need it."

In slow and solemn accents, and with great feeling, the judge uttered the Lord's Prayer. Bob repeated every word after him. When it was ended—

"God be merciful to your soul!" exclaimed the judge.

"Amen!" said all present.

One of the corregidores now passed the noose of the lasso round Bob's neck, another bound his eyes, a third person drew his feet out of the stirrups, while a fourth stepped behind his horse with a heavy riding whip.

All was done in the deepest silence; not a word was breathed; not a foot-fall heard on the soft-yielding turf. There was something awful and oppressive in the profound stillness that reigned in the vast enclosure.

The whip fell. The horse gave a spring forwards. At the same moment Bob made a desperate clutch at the bridle, and a loud "Hold!" burst in thrilling tones from the lips of the judge.

It was too late; Bob was already hanging. The judge pushed forward, nearly riding down the man who held the whip, and seizing Bob in his arms, raised him on his own horse, supporting him with one hand, while with the other he strove to unfasten the noose. His whole gigantic frame trembled with eagerness and exertion. The procurador, corregidores, all, in short, stood in open-mouthed wonder at this strange proceeding.

"Whisky! whisky! Has nobody any whisky?" shouted the judge.

One of the men sprang forward with a whisky-flask, another supporting the body, and a third the feet, of the half-hanged man, while the judge poured a few drops of spirits into his mouth. The cravat, which had not been taken off, had hindered the breaking of the neck. Bob at last opened his eyes, and gazed vacantly around him.

"Bob," said the judge, "you had something to say, hadn't you, about Johnny?"

"Johnny," gasped Bob; "Johnny."

"What's become of him?"

"He's gone to San Antonio, Johnny."

"To San Antonio!" repeated the judge, with an expression of great alarm overspreading his features.

"To San Antonio—to Padre José," continued Bob; "a Catholic. Beware."

"A traitor, then!" muttered several.

"Catholic!" exclaimed the judge. The words he had heard seemed to deprive him of all strength. His arms fell slowly and gradually by his side, and Bob was again hanging from the lasso.

"A Catholic! a traitor!" repeated several of the men; "a citizen and a traitor!"

"So it is, men!" exclaimed the judge. "We've no time to lose," continued he, in a harsh, hurried voice; "no time to lose; we must catch him."

"That must we," said several voices, "or our plans are betrayed to the Mexicans."

"After him immediately to San Anto-

nio!" cried the judge with the same desperately hurried manner.

"To San Antonio!" repeated the men, pushing their way through the curtain of moss and branches. As soon as they were outside, those who were dismounted sprang into the saddle, and without another word, the whole party galloped away in the direction of San Antonio.

The judge alone remained, seemingly lost in thought; his countenance pale and anxious, and his eyes following the riders. His reverie, however, had lasted but a very few seconds, when he seized my arm.

"Hasten to my house," cried he; "lose no time, don't spare horse-flesh. Take Ptoiy and a fresh beast; hurry over to San Felipe, and tell Stephen Austin what has happened, and what you have seen and heard."

"But, judge"—

"Off with you at once, if you would do Texas a service. Bring my wife and daughter back."

And so saying, he literally drove me from under the tree, pushing me out with hands and feet. I was so startled at the expression of violent impatience and anxiety which his features assumed, that, without venturing to make further objection, I struck the spurs into my mustang and galloped off.

Before I had got fifty yards from the tree, I looked round. The judge had disappeared.

I rode full speed to the judge's house, and thence on a fresh horse to San Felipe, where I found Colonel Austin, who seemed much alarmed by the news I brought him, had horses saddled, and sent round to all the neighbours. Before the wife and step-daughter of the judge had made their preparations to accompany me home, he started with fifty armed men in the direction of San Antonio.

I escorted the ladies to their house, but scarcely had we arrived there, when I was seized with a fever, the result of my recent fatigues and sufferings. For some days my life was in danger, but at last a good constitution, and the kindest and most watchful nursing, triumphed over the disease. As soon as I was able to mount a horse, I set out for Mr. Neal's plantation, in company with his huntsman Anthony, who, after spending many days, and riding over hundreds of miles of ground in quest of me, had at last found me out.

Our way led up past the Patriarch, and, as we approached it, we saw innumerable birds of prey, and carrion crows circling

round it, croaking and screaming. I turned my eyes in another direction; but, nevertheless, I felt a strange sort of longing to revisit the tree. Anthony had ridden on, and was already hidden from view behind its branches. Presently I heard him give a loud shout of exultation. I jumped off my horse, and led it through a small opening in the leafage.

Some forty paces from me the body of a man was hanging by a lasso from the very same branch on which Bob had been hung. It was not Bob, however, for the corpse was much too short and small for him.

I drew nearer. "Johnny!" I exclaimed. "That's Johnny!"

"It was," answered Anthony. "Thank Heaven, there's an end of him!"

I shuddered. "But where is Bob?"

"Bob?" cried Anthony. "Bob!"

He glanced toward the grave. The mound of earth seemed to me larger and higher than when I had last seen it. Doubtless the murderer lay beside his victim.

"Shall we not render the last service to this wretch, Anthony?" asked I.

"The scoundrel!" answered the huntsman. "I won't dirty my hands with him. Let him poison the kites and the crows!"

We rode on.

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From the Westminster Review for December.

*Poems.* By William Thom. Inverury, Aberdeenshire. (Unpublished.)

THE poems which we wish to introduce to our readers have appeared in the Aberdeen newspapers with a few exceptions. They have never been collected and published. Their author, Mr. Thom, is a weaver in Inverury, a small rural burgh in Aberdeenshire, situated about sixteen miles from the capital of the county, where the Ury runs into the Don, near the foot of a lofty heather-clad mountain called Benachie. Inverury is not destitute of interesting associations. Its Bass—a small round green island in a morass—is the subject of a prophesy of Thomas the Rhymer. Not far from Inverury is the wild and barren field of Harlow, where, four centuries ago, lowland valour proved its superiority over Celtic fire; the civic Baillies defeated the highland chieftains, and Provost Davidson, of Aberdeen, routing the most powerful of the Lords of the Isles. Benachie gave a name to one of the giants celebrated in old ballads, still *crooned* by

Mr. Hill and the Post Office, or upon his abrupt dismissal from office, before his plan was half developed; we have rather preferred directing our readers' attention to some of the more glaring defects in post office management, about which there can be no dispute, and for the redress of which there is most urgent necessity.



From Blackwood's Magazine for January.  
ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

No. III.

#### THE STRUGGLE.

I HAD been but three or four months in Texas, when, in consequence of the oppressive conduct of the Mexican military authorities, symptoms of discontent showed themselves, and several skirmishes occurred between the American settlers and the soldiery. The two small forts of Velasco and Nacogdoches were taken by the former, and their garrisons and a couple of field-officers made prisoners; soon after which, however, the quarrel was made up by the intervention of Colonel Austin on the part of Texas, and Colonel Mejia on the part of the Mexican authorities.

But in the year '33 occurred Santa Anna's defection from the liberal party, and the imprisonment of Stephen F. Austin, the Texian representative in the Mexican congress, by the vice-president, Gomez Farias. This was followed by Texas adopting the constitution of 1834, and declaring itself an independent state of the Mexican republic. Finally, towards the close of 1835, Texas threw off the Mexican yoke altogether, voted itself a free and sovereign republic, and prepared to defend by arms its newly asserted liberty.

The first step to be taken was, to secure our communications with the United States by getting possession of the sea-ports. General Cos had occupied Galveston harbour, and built and garrisoned a block-fort, nominally for the purpose of enforcing the customs laws, but in reality with a view to cut off our communications with New Orleans and the States. This fort it was necessary to get possession of, and my friend Fanning and myself were appointed to that duty by the Alcalde, who had taken a prominent part in all that had occurred.

Our whole force and equipment wherewith to accomplish this enterprise, consisted

in a sealed despatch, to be opened at the town of Columbia, and a half-breed, named Agosino, who acted as our guide. On reaching Columbia, we called together the principal inhabitants of the place, and of the neighbouring towns of Bolivar and Marion, unsealed the letter in their presence, and six hours afterwards the forces therein specified were assembled, and we were on our march towards Galveston. The next day the fort was taken, and the garrison made prisoners, without our losing a single man.

We sent off our guide to the government at San Felipe with news of our success. In nine days he returned, bringing us the thanks of congress, and fresh orders. We were to leave a garrison in the fort, and then ascend Trinity river, and march towards San Antonio de Bexar. This route was all the more agreeable to Fanning and myself, as it would bring us into the immediate vicinity of the *haciendas*, or estates, of which we had some time previously obtained a grant from the Texian government; and we did not doubt that we were indebted to our friend the Alcalde for the orders which thus conciliated our private convenience with our public duty.

As we marched along we found the whole country in commotion, the settlers all arming, and hastening to the distant place of rendezvous. We arrived at Trinity river one afternoon, and immediately sent messengers for forty miles in all directions to summon the inhabitants. At the period in question, the plantations in that part of the country were very few and far between, but nevertheless by the afternoon of the next day we had got together four-and-thirty men, mounted on mustangs, each equipped with rifle and bowie-knife, powder-horn and bullet-bag, and furnished with provisions for several days. With these we started for San Antonio de Bexar, a march of two hundred and fifty miles, through trackless prairies intersected with rivers and streams, which, although not quite so big as the Mississippi or Potomac, were yet deep and wide enough to have offered serious impediment to regular armies. But to Texian farmers and backwoodsmen, they were trifling obstacles. Those we could not wade through we swam over; and in due time, and without any incident worthy of note, reached the appointed place of rendezvous, which was on the river Salado, about fifteen miles from San Antonio, the principal city of the province.

This latter place it was intended to attack—an enterprise of some boldness and risk, considering that the town was protected by a strong fort, amply provided with heavy artillery, and had a garrison of nearly three thousand men, commanded by officers who had, for the most part, distinguished themselves in the revolutionary wars against the Spaniards. Our whole army, which we found encamped on the Salado, under the command of General Austin, did not exceed eight hundred men.

The day after that on which Fanning and myself, with our four and thirty recruits, reached headquarters, a council of war was held, and it was resolved to advance as far as the mission of Santa Espada. The advanced guard was to push forward immediately; the main body would follow the next day. Fanning and myself were appointed to the command of the vanguard, in conjunction with Mr. Wharton, a wealthy planter, who had brought a strong party of volunteers with him, and whose mature age and cool judgment, it was thought, would counterbalance any excess of youthful heat and impetuosity on our part. Selecting ninety-two men out of the eight hundred, who, to a man, volunteered to accompany us, we set out for the mission.

These missions are a sort of picket-houses or outposts of the Catholic church, and are found in great numbers in all frontier provinces of Spanish America, especially in Texas, Santa Fé, and Cohabilla. They are usually of sufficient strength to afford their inmates security against any predatory party of Indians or other marauders, and are occupied by priests, who while using their endeavours to spread the doctrines of the Church of Rome, act also as spies and agents of the Mexican government.

On reaching San Espada, we held a discussion as to the propriety of remaining there until the general came up, or of advancing at once towards the river. Wharton inclined to the former plan, and it was certainly the most prudent, for the mission was a strong building, surrounded by a high wall, and might have been held against very superior numbers. Fanning and I, however, did not like the idea of being cooped up in a house, and at last Wharton yielded. We left our horses and mustangs in charge of eight men, and with the remainder set out in the direction of the Salado, which flows from north to south, a third of a mile to the westward

of the mission. About half-way between the latter and the river, was a small group, or island, of muskeet trees, the only object that broke the uniformity of the prairie. The bank of the river on our side was tolerably steep, about eight or ten feet high, hollowed out here and there, and covered with a thick network of wild vines. The Salado at this spot describes a sort of bow-shaped curve, with a ford at either end, by which alone the river can be passed, for although not very broad, it is rapid and deep. We resolved to take up a position within this bow, calculating that we might manage to defend the two fords, which were not above a quarter of a mile apart.

At the same time we did not lose sight of the dangers of such a position, and of the almost certainty that if the enemy managed to cross the river, we should be surrounded and cut off. But our success on the few occasions on which we had hitherto come to blows with the Mexicans, at Velasco, Nacogdoches, and Galveston, had inspired us with confidence, that we considered ourselves a match for thousands of such foes, and actually began to wish the enemy would attack us before our main body came up. We reconnoitered the ground, stationed a picket of twelve men at each ford, and an equal number in the island of muskeet trees; and established ourselves with the remainder amongst the vines and in the hollows on the river bank.

The commissariat department of the Texian army was, as may be supposed, not yet placed upon any very regular footing. In fact, every man was, for the present, his own commissary-general. Finding our stock of provisions to be very small, we sent out a party of foragers, who soon returned with three sheep, which they had taken from a *rancho* within a mile of San Antonio. An old priest, whom they found there, had threatened with the anger of Heaven and of General Cos; but they paid little attention to his denunciation, and, throwing down three dollars, walked off with the sheep. The priest became furious, got upon his mule, and trotted away in the direction of the city to complain to General Cos of the misconduct of the heretics.

After this we made no doubt that we should soon have a visit from the worthy Dons. Nevertheless the evening and the night passed away without incident. Day broke—still no signs of the Mexicans. This treacherous sort of calm, we thought, might

forbode a storm, and we did not allow it to lull us into security. We let the men get their breakfast, which they had hardly finished when the picket from the upper ford came in with news that a strong body of cavalry was approaching the river, and that their vanguard was already in the hollow way leading to the ford. We had scarcely received this intelligence when we heard the blare of the trumpets, and the next moment we saw the officers push their horses up the declivitous bank, closely followed by their men, whom they formed up in the prairie. We counted six small squadrons, about three hundred men in all. They were the Durango dragoons—smart troops enough to all appearance, capitally mounted and equipped, and armed with carbines and sabres.

Although the enemy had doubtless reconnoitered us from the opposite shore, and ascertained our position, he could not form any accurate idea of our numbers, for with a view to deceive him, we kept the men in constant motion, sometimes showing a part of them on the prairie, then causing them to disappear again behind the vines and bushes. This was all very knowing for young soldiers such as we were; but, on the other hand, we had committed a grievous error, and sinned against all established military rules, by not placing a picket on the further side of the river, to warn us of the approach of the enemy, and the direction in which he was coming. There can be little doubt that if we had had earlier notice of their approach, thirty or forty good marksmen—and all our people were that—might not only have delayed the advance of the Mexicans, but perhaps even totally disgusted them of their attempt to cross the Salado. The hollow way on the other side of the river, leading to the ford, was narrow and tolerably steep, and the bank at least six times as high as on our side. Nothing would have been easier than to have stationed a party, so as to pick off the cavalry as they wound through this sort of pass, and emerged two by two upon the shore. Our error, however, did not strike us till it was too late to repair it; so we were fain to console ourselves with the reflection that the Mexicans would be much more likely to attribute our negligence to an excess of confidence in our resources, than to the inexperience in military matters, which was its real cause. We resolved to do our best to merit the good opinion which we thus supposed them to entertain of us.

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When the whole of the dragoons had crossed the water, they marched on for a short distance in an easterly direction; then, wheeling to the right, proceeded southward, until within some five hundred paces of us, where they halted. In this position, the line of cavalry formed the chord of the arc described by the river, and occupied by us.

As soon as they halted, they opened their fire, although they could not see one of us, for we were completely sheltered by the bank. Our Mexican heroes, however, apparently did not think it necessary to be within sight or range of their opponents before firing, for they gave us a rattling volley at a distance which no carbine would carry. This done, others galloped on for about a hundred yards, halted again, loaded, fired another volley, and then giving another gallop, fired again. They continued this sort of *manège* till they found themselves within two hundred and fifty paces of us, and then appeared inclined to take a little time for reflection.

We kept ourselves perfectly still. The dragoons evidently did not like the aspect of matters. Our remaining concealed, and not replying to their fire, seemed to bother them. We saw the officers taking a deal of pains to encourage their men, and at last two squadrons advanced, the others following more slowly, a short distance in rear. This was the moment we had waited for. No sooner had the dragoons got into a canter, than six of our men who had received orders to that effect, sprang up the bank, took steady aim at the officers, fired, and then jumped down again.

As we had expected, the small numbers that had shown themselves, encouraged the Mexicans to advance. They seemed at first taken rather aback by the fall of four of their officers; but nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, they came thundering along full speed. They were within sixty or seventy yards of us, when Fanning and thirty of our riflemen ascended the bank, and with a coolness and precision that would have done credit to the most veteran troops, poured a steady fire into the ranks of the dragoons.

It requires some nerve and courage for men who have never gone through any regular military training, to stand their ground singly and unprotected, within fifty yards of an advancing line of cavalry. Our fellows did it, however, and fired, not all at once, or in a hurry, but slowly and deliberately; a running fire, every shot of which told. Sad-

dle after saddle was emptied; the men, as they had been ordered, always picking out the foremost horsemen, and as soon as they had fired, jumping down the bank to reload. When the whole of the thirty men had discharged their rifles, Wharton and myself, with the reserve of six and thirty more took their places; but the dragoons had almost had enough already, and we had scarcely fired ten shots when they executed a right-about turn, with an uniformity and rapidity which did infinite credit to their drill, and went off at a pace that soon carried them out of the reach of our bullets. They had probably not expected so warm a reception. We saw their officers doing every thing they could to check their flight, imploring, threatening, even cutting at them with their sabres, but it was no use; if they were to be killed, it must be in their own way, and they preferred being cut down by their officers to encountering the deadly precision of rifles, in the hands of men who, being sure of hitting a squirrel at a hundred yards, were not likely to miss a Durango dragoon at any point within range.

Our object in ordering the men to fire slowly was, always to have thirty or forty rifles loaded, wherewith to receive the enemy should he attempt a charge *en masse*. But our first greeting had been a sickener, and it appeared almost doubtful whether he would venture to attack us again, although the officers did every thing in their power to induce their men to advance. For a long time, neither threats, entreaties, nor reproaches produced any effect. We saw the officers gesticulating furiously, pointing to us with their sabres, and impatiently spurring their horses, till the fiery animals plunged and reared, and sprang with all four feet from the ground. It is only just to say, that the officers exhibited a degree of courage far beyond anything we had expected from them. Of the two squadrons that charged us, two-thirds of the officers had fallen; but those who remained, instead of appearing intimidated by their comrades' fate, redoubled their efforts to bring their men forward.

At last there appeared some probability of their accomplishing this, after a most curious and truly Mexican fashion. Posting themselves in front of their squadrons, they rode on alone for a hundred yards or so, halted, looked round, as much as to say—"You see there is no danger as far as this," and then galloping back, led their men on.

Each time that they executed this manœuvre, the dragoons would advance slowly some thirty or forty paces, and then halt as simultaneously as if the word of command had been given. Off went the officers again, some distance to the front, and then back again to their men, and got them on a little further. In this manner these heroes were inveigled once more to within a hundred and fifty yards of our position.

Of course, at each of the numerous halts which they made during their advance, they favoured us with a general, but most innocuous discharge of their carbines; and at last, gaining confidence, I suppose, from our passiveness, and from the noise and smoke they themselves had been making, three squadrons which had not yet been under fire, formed open column and advanced at a trot. Without giving them time to halt or reflect—"Forward! Charge!" shouted the officers, urging their own horses to their utmost speed; and following the impulse thus given, the three squadrons came charging furiously along.

Up sprang thirty of our men to receive them. Their orders were to fire slowly, and not throw away a shot, but the gleaming sabres and rapid approach of the dragoons flurried some of them, and firing a hasty volley, they jumped down the bank again. This precipitation had nearly been fatal to us. Several of the dragoons fell, and there was some confusion and a momentary faltering amongst the others; but they still came on. At this critical moment, Wharton and myself, with the reserve, showed ourselves on the bank. "Slow and sure—mark your men!" shouted we both. Wharton on the right and I on the left. The command was obeyed: rifle after rifle cracked off, always aimed at the foremost of the dragoons, and at every report a saddle was emptied. Before we had all fired, Fanning and a dozen of his sharpest men had again loaded, and were by our side. For nearly a minute the Mexicans remained, as if stupefied by our murderous fire, and uncertain whether to advance or retire; but as those who attempted the former, were invariably shot down, they at last began a retreat, which was soon converted into a rout. We gave them a farewell volley, which eased a few more horses of their riders, and then got under cover again, to await what might next occur.

But the Mexican caballeros had no notion of coming up to the scratch a third time.



They kept patrolling about, some three or four hundred yards off, and firing volleys at us, which they were able to do with perfect impunity, as at that distance we did not think proper to return a shot.

The skirmish had lasted nearly three quarters of an hour. Strange to say, we had not had a single man wounded, although at times the bullets had fallen about us as thick as hail. We could not account for this. Many of us had been hit by the balls, but a bruise or a graze of the skin was the worst consequence that had ensued. We were in a fair way to deem ourselves invulnerable.

We were beginning to think that the fight was over for the day, when our videttes at the lower ford brought us the somewhat unpleasant intelligence that large masses of infantry were approaching the river, and would soon be in sight. The words were hardly uttered, when the roll of the drums, and shrill squeak of the fife became audible, and in a few minutes the head of the column of infantry, having crossed the ford, ascended the sloping bank, and defiled in the prairie opposite the island of muskett trees. As company after company appeared, we were able to form a pretty exact estimate of their numbers. There were two battalions, together about a thousand men; and they brought a field-piece with them.

These were certainly rather long odds to be opposed to seventy-two men and three officers; for it must be remembered that we had left twenty of our people at the mission, and in the island of trees. Two battalions of infantry, and six squadrons of dragoons—the latter, to be sure, disheartened and diminished by the loss of some fifty men, but nevertheless formidable opponents, now they were supported by the foot soldiers. About twenty Mexicans to each of us. It was getting past a joke. We were all capital shots, and most of us, besides our rifles, had a brace of pistols in our belts; but what were seventy-five rifles, and five or six score of pistols against a thousand muskets and bayonets, two hundred and fifty dragoons, and a field-piece loaded with canister? If the Mexicans had a spark of courage or soldiership about them, our fate was sealed. But it was exactly this courage and soldiership, which we made sure would be wanting.

Nevertheless we, the officers, could not repress a feeling of anxiety and self-reproach, when we reflected that we had brought our

comrades into such a hazardous predicament. But on looking around us, our apprehensions vanished. Nothing could exceed the perfect coolness and confidence with which the men were cleaning and preparing their rifles for the approaching conflict; no bravado—no boasting, talking, or laughing, but a calm decision of manner, which at once told us, that if it were possible to overcome such odds as were brought against us, those were the men to do it.

Our arrangements for the approaching struggle were soon completed. Fanning and Wharton were to make head against the infantry and cavalry. I was to capture the field-piece—an eight-pounder.

This gun was placed by the Mexicans upon their extreme left, close to the river, the shores of which it commanded for a considerable distance. The bank on which we were posted was, as before mentioned, indented by caves and hollows, and covered with a thick tapestry of vines and other plants, which was now very useful in concealing us from the artillerymen. The latter made a pretty good guess at our position however, and at the first discharge, the canister whizzed past us at a very short distance. There was not a moment to lose, for one well-directed shot might exterminate half of us. Followed by a dozen men, I worked my way as well as I could through the labyrinth of vines and bushes, and was not more than fifty yards from the gun, when it was again fired. No one was hurt, although the shot was evidently intended for my party. The enemy could not see us; but the motion of the vines, as we passed through them, had betrayed our whereabouts: so, perceiving that we were discovered, I sprang up the bank into the prairie, followed by my men, to whom I shouted, above all to aim at the artillerymen.

I had raised my own rifle to my shoulder, when I let it fall again in astonishment at an apparition that presented itself to my view. This was a tall, lean, wild figure, with a face overgrown by a long beard that hung down upon his breast, and dressed in a leather cap, jacket, and moccasins. Where this man had sprung from was a perfect riddle. He was unknown to any of us, although I had some vague recollection of having seen him before, but where or when, I could not call to mind. He had a long rifle in his hands, which he must have fired once already, for one of the artillerymen lay dead by

the gun. At the moment I first caught sight of him, he shot down another, and then began reloading with a rapid dexterity, that proved him to be well used to the thing. My men were as much astonished as I was by this strange apparition, which appeared to have started out of the earth; and for a few seconds they forgot to fire, and stood gazing at the stranger. The latter did not seem to approve of their inaction.

"D— yer eyes, ye starin' fools," shouted he in a rough hoarse voice, "don't ye see them art'lerymen? Why don't ye knock 'em on the head?"

It certainly was not the moment to remain idle. We fired; but our astonishment had thrown us off our balance, and we nearly all missed. We sprang down the bank again to load, just as the men serving the gun were slewing it round, so as to bring it to bear upon us. Before this was accomplished, we were under cover, and the stranger had the benefit of the discharge, of which he took no more notice than if he had borne a charmed life. Again we heard the crack of his rifle, and when, having reloaded, we once more ascended the bank, he was taking aim at the last artilleryman, who fell, as his companions had done.

"D— ye, for laggin' sellers!" growled the stranger. "Why don't ye take that 'ere big gun?"

Our small numbers, the bad direction of our first volley, but above all, the precipitation with which we had jumped down the bank after firing it, had so encouraged the enemy, that a company of infantry, drawn up some distance in rear of the field-piece, fired a volley, and advanced at double-quick time, part of them making a small *détour* with the intention of cutting us off from our friends. At this moment, we saw Fanning and thirty men coming along the river bank to our assistance; so without minding the Mexicans who were getting behind us, we rushed forward to within twenty paces of those in our front, and taking steady aim, brought down every man his bird. The sort of desperate coolness with which this was done, produced the greater effect on our opponents, as being something quite out of their way. They would, perhaps, have stood firm against a volley from five times our number, at a rather greater distance; but they did not like having their mustaches singed by our powder; and after a moment's wavering and hesitation, they shouted out

"Diabolos! Diabolos!" and throwing away their muskets, broke into a precipitate flight.

Fanning and Wharton now came up with all the men. Under cover of the infantry's advance, the gun had been re-manned, but, luckily for us, only by infantry soldiers; for had there been artillerymen to seize the moment when we were all standing exposed on the prairie, they might have diminished our numbers not a little. The fuse was already burning, and we had just time to get under the bank when the gun went off. Up we jumped again, and looked about us to see what was next to be done.

Although hitherto all the advantages had been on our side, our situation was still a very perilous one. The company we had put to flight had rejoined its battalion, which was now beginning to advance by *échelon* of companies. The second battalion, which was rather further from us, was moving forward in like manner, and in a parallel direction. We should probably, therefore, have to resist the attack of a dozen companies, one after the other; and it was to be feared that the Mexicans would finish by getting over their panic terror of our rifles, and exchange their distant and ineffectual platoon-firing for a charge with the bayonet, in which their superior numbers would tell. We observed, also, that the cavalry, which had been keeping itself at a safe distance, was now put in motion, and formed up close to the island of musket trees, to which the right flank of the infantry was also extending itself. Thence they had clear ground for a charge down upon us.

Meanwhile, what had become of the twelve men whom we had left in the island? Were they still there, or had they fallen back upon the mission in dismay at the overwhelming force of the Mexicans? If the latter, it was a bad business for us, for they were all capital shots, and well armed with rifles and pistols. We heartily wished we had brought them with us, as well as the eight men at the mission. Cut off from us as they were, what could they do against the whole of the cavalry and two companies of infantry which were now approaching the island? To add to our difficulties, our ammunition was beginning to run short. Many of us had only had enough powder and ball for fifteen or sixteen charges, which were now reduced to six or seven. It was no use desponding, however; and, after a hurried consultation, it was agreed that Fanning and

Wharton should open a fire upon the enemy's centre, while I made a dash at the field-piece before any more infantry had time to come up for its protection.

The infantry-men who had re-manned the gun were by this time shot down, and, as none had come to replace them, it was served by an officer alone. Just as I gave the order to advance to the twenty men who were to follow me, this officer fell. Simultaneously with his fall, I heard a sort of yell behind me, and, turning round, saw that it proceeded from the wild spectre-looking stranger, whom I had lost sight of during the last few minutes. A ball had struck him, and he fell heavily to the ground, his rifle, which had just been discharged, and was still smoking from muzzle and touchhole, clutched convulsively in both hands; his features distorted, his eyes rolling frightfully. There was something in the expression of his face at that moment which brought back to me, in vivid colouring, one of the earliest and most striking incidents of my residence in Texas. Had I not myself seen him hung, I could have sworn that *Bob Rock, the murderer*, now lay before me.

A second look at the man gave additional force to this idea.

"Bob!" I exclaimed.

"Bob!" repeated the wounded man, in a broken voice, and with a look of astonishment, almost of dismay. "Who calls Bob?"

A wild gleam shot from his eyes, which the next instant closed. He had become insensible.

It was neither the time nor the place to indulge in speculations on this singular resurrection of a man whose execution I had myself witnessed. With twelve hundred foes around us, we had plenty to occupy all our thoughts and attention. My people were already masters of the gun, and some of them drew it forwards and pointed it against the enemy, while the others spread out right and left to protect it with their rifles. I was busy loading the piece when an exclamation of surprise from one of the men made me look up.

There seemed to be something extraordinary happening amongst the Mexicans, to judge from the degree of confusion which suddenly showed itself in their ranks, and which, beginning with the cavalry and right flank of the infantry, soon became general throughout the whole force. It was a sort of wavering and unsteadiness which, to us,

was quite unaccountable, for Fanning and Wharton had not yet fired twenty shots, and, indeed, had only just come within range of the enemy. Not knowing what it could portend, I called in my men and stationed them round the gun, which I had double-shotted, and stood ready to fire.

The confusion in the Mexican ranks increased. For about a minute they waved and reeled to and fro, as if uncertain which way to go; and, at last, the cavalry and right of the line, fairly broke, and ran for it. This example was followed by the centre, and presently the whole of the two battalions and three hundred cavalry were scattered over the prairie, in the wildest and most disorderly flight. I gave them a parting salute from the eight-pounder, which would doubtless have accelerated their movements had it been possible to have run faster than they were already doing.

We stood staring after the fugitives in perfect bewilderment, totally unable to explain their apparently causeless panic. At last the report of several rifles from the island of trees gave us a clue to the mystery.

The infantry, whose left flank extended to the Salado, had pushed their right into the prairie as far as the island of muskeet trees, in order to connect their line with the dragoons, and then by making a general advance, to attack us on all sides at once, and get the full advantage of their superior numbers. The plan was not a bad one. Infantry and cavalry approached the island, quite unsuspecting of its being occupied. The twelve riflemen whom we had stationed there remained perfectly quiet, concealed behind the trees; allowed squadrons and companies to come within twenty paces of them, and then opened their fire, first from their pistols, then from their rifles.

Some six and thirty shots, every one of which told, fired suddenly from a cover close to their rear, were enough to startle even the best troops, much more so our Mexican dons, who, already sufficiently inclined to a panic, now believed themselves fallen into an ambuscade, and surrounded on all sides by the incarnate *diabolos*, as they called us. The cavalry, who had not yet recovered the thrashing we had given them, were ready enough for a run, and the infantry were not slow to follow them.

Our first impulse was naturally to pursue the flying enemy, but a discovery made by some of the men, induced us to abandon that

idea. They had opened the pouches of the dead Mexicans in order to supply themselves with ammunition, ours being nearly expended; but the powder of the cartridges turned out so bad as to be useless. It was little better than coal dust, and would not carry a ball fifty paces to kill or wound. This accounted for our apparent invulnerability to the fire of the Mexicans. The muskets also were of a very inferior description. Both they and the cartridges were of English make; the former being stamped Birmingham, and the latter having the name of an English powder manufactory, with the significant addition, "for exportation."

Under these circumstances, we had nothing to do but let the Mexicans run. We sent a detachment to the musket island, to unite itself with the twelve men who had done such good service there, and thence advance towards the ford. We ourselves proceeded slowly in the latter direction. This demonstration brought the fugitives back again, for they had, most of them, in the wild precipitation of their flight, passed the only place where they could cross the river. They began crowding over in the greatest confusion, foot and horse all mixed up together; and by the time we got within a hundred paces of the ford, the prairie was nearly clear of them. There were still a couple of hundred men on our side of the water, completely at our mercy, and Wharton, who was a little in front with thirty men, gave the word to fire upon them. No one obeyed. He repeated the command. Not a rifle was raised. He stared at his men, astonished and impatient at this strange disobedience. An old weather-beaten bear-hunter stepped forward, squirting out his tobacco juice with all imaginable deliberation.

"I tell ye what, captin'!" said he, passing his quid over from his right cheek to his left; "I kalkilate, captin'," he continued, "we'd better leave the poor devils of dons alone."

"The poor devils of dons alone!" repeated Wharton in a rage. "Are you mad, man?"

Fanning and I had just come up with our detachment, and were not less surprised and angry than Wharton was, at this breach of discipline. The man, however, did not allow himself to be disconcerted.

"There's a proverb, gentlemen," said he, turning to us, "which says, that one should

build a golden bridge for a beaten enemy; and a good proverb it is, I kalkilate—a considerable good one."

"What do you mean, man, with your golden bridge?" cried Fanning. "This is no time for proverbs."

"Do you know that you are liable to be punished for insubordination?" said I. "It's your duty to fire, and do the enemy all the harm you can; not to be quoting proverbs."

"Kalkilate it is," replied the man very coolly. "Kalkilate I could shoot 'em without either danger or trouble; but I reckon that would be like Spaniards or Mexicans; not like Americans—not prudent."

"Not like Americans? Would you let the enemy escape, then, when we have him in our power?"

"Kalkilate I would. Kalkilate we should do ourselves more harm than him by shootin' down his people. That was a considerable sensible commandment of yourn, always to shoot the foremost of the Mexicans when they attacked. It discouraged the bold ones, and was a sort of premium on cowardice. Them as lagged behind escaped, them as came bravely on was shot. It was a good kalkilation. If we had shot 'em without discrimination, the cowards would have got bold, seen' that they weren't safer in rear than in front. The cowards are our best friends. Now them runaways," continued he, pointing to the Mexicans, who were crowding over the river, "are jest the most cowardly of 'em all, for in their fright they quite forgot the ford, and it's because they ran so far beyond it, that they are last to cross the water. And if you fire at 'em now, they'll find that they get nothin' by bein' cowards, and next time, I reckon, they'll sell their hides as dear as they can."

Untimely as this palaver, to use a popular word, undoubtedly was, we could scarcely forbear smiling at the simple *naïve* manner in which the old Yankee spoke his mind.

"Kalkilate, captins'," he concluded, "you'd better let the poor devils run. We shall get more profit by it than if we shot five hundred of 'em. Next time they'll run away directly, to show their gratitude for our generosity."

The man stepped back into the ranks, and his comrades nodded approvingly, and calculated and reckoned that Zebediah had spoke a true word; and meanwhile the enemy had crossed the river, and was out of our reach. We were forced to content

ourselves with sending a party across the water to follow up the Mexicans, and observe the direction they took. We then returned to our old position.

My first thought on arriving there was to search for the body of Bob Rock—for he it undoubtedly was, who had so mysteriously appeared amongst us. I repaired to the spot where I had seen him fall; but could discover no signs of him, either dead or alive. I went over the whole scene of the fight, searched amongst the vines and along the bank of the river; there were plenty of dead Mexicans—cavalry, infantry, and artillery, but no Bob was to be found, nor could any one inform me what had become of him, although several had seen him fall.

I was continuing my search, when I met Wharton, who asked me what I was seeking, and on learning, shook his head gravely. He had seen the wild prairieman, he said, but whence he came, or whither he was gone, was more than he could tell. It was a long time since any thing had startled and astonished him so much as this man's appearance and proceedings. He (Wharton,) had been stationed with his party amongst the vines, about fifty paces in rear of Fanning's people, when just as the Mexican infantry had crossed the ford, and were forming up, he saw a man approaching at a brisk trot from the north side of the prairie. He halted about a couple of hundred yards from Wharton, tied his mustang to a bush, and with his rifle on his arm, strode along the edge of the prairie in the direction of the Mexicans. When he passed near Wharton, the latter called out to him to halt, and say who he was, whence he came, and whither going.

"Who I am is no business of yourn," replied the man; "nor where I come from neither. You'll soon see where I'm goin'. I'm goin' agin' the enemy."

"Then you must come and join us," cried Wharton.

This the stranger testily refused to do. He'd fight on his own hook, he said.

Wharton told him he must not do that.

He should like to see who'd hinder him, he said, and walked on. The next moment he shot the first artilleryman. After that they let him take his own way.

Neither Wharton, nor any of his men, knew what had become of him; but at last I met with a bear-hunter, who gave me the following information.

"Calkilatin'," said he, "that the wild prairieman's rifle was a capital good one, as good a one as ever killed a bear, he tho't it a pity that it should fall into bad hands, so went to secure it himself; although the frontispiece of its dead owner warn't very invitin'. But when he stooped to take the gun, he got such a shove as knocked him backwards, and on getting up, he saw the prairieman openin' his jacket and examinin' a wound on his breast, which was neither deep nor dangerous, although it had taken away the man's senses for a while. The ball had struck the breast bone, and was quite near the skin, so that the wounded man pushed it out with his fingers; and then supporting himself on his rifle, got up from the ground, and without either a thankye, or a d—nye, walked to where his mustang was tied up, got on its back, and rode slowly away in a northerly direction.

This was all the information I could obtain on the subject, and shortly afterwards the main body of our army came up, and I had other matters to occupy my attention. General Austin expressed his gratitude and approbation to our brave fellows, after a truly republican and democratic fashion. He shook hands with all the rough bear and buffalo hunters, and drank with them. Fanning and myself he promoted, on the spot, to the rank of colonel.

We were giving the general a detailed account of the morning's events, when a Mexican priest appeared with a flag of truce and several waggons, and craved permission to take away the dead. This was of course granted, and we had some talk with the padre, who, however, was too wily a customer to allow himself to be pumped. What little we did get out of him, determined us to advance the same afternoon against San Antonio. We thought there was some chance, that in the present panic-struck state of the Mexicans, we might obtain possession of the place by a bold and sudden assault.

In this, however, we were mistaken. We found the gates closed, and the enemy on his guard, but too dispirited to oppose our taking up a position at about cannon-shot from the great redoubt. We had soon invested all the outlets from the city.

San Antonio de Bexar lies in a fertile and well-irrigated valley, stretching westward from the river Salado. In the centre of the town rises the fort of the Alamo, which at

that time was armed with forty-eight pieces of artillery of various calibre. The garrison of the town and fortress was nearly three thousand strong.

Our artillery consisted of two batteries of four six, and five eight-pounders; our army of eleven hundred men, with which we had not only to carry on the siege, but also to make head against the forces that would be sent against us from Cohahuila, on the frontier of which province General Cos was stationed, with a strong body of troops.

We were not discouraged, however, and opened our fire upon the city. During the first week, not a day passed without smart skirmishes. General Cos's dragoons were swarming about us like so many Bedouins. But although well-mounted, and capital horsemen, they were no match for our backwoodsmen. Those from the western states especially, accustomed to Indian warfare and cunning, laid traps and ambuscades for the Mexicans, and were constantly destroying their detachments. As for the besieged, if one of them showed his head for ten seconds above the city wall, he was sure of getting a rifle bullet through it. I cannot say that our besieging army was a perfect model of military discipline; but any deficiencies in that respect were made good by the intelligence of the men, and the zeal and unanimity with which they pursued the accomplishment of one great object—the capture of the city—the liberty and independence of Texas.

The badness of the gunpowder used by the Mexicans, was again of great service to us. Many of their cannon balls that fell far short of us, were collected and returned to them with powerful effect. We kept a sharp look-out for convoys, and captured no less than three—one of horses, another of provisions, and twenty thousand dollars in money.

After an eight weeks' siege, a breach having been made, the city surrendered, and a month later the fort followed the example. With a powerful park of artillery, we then advanced upon Goliad, the strongest fortress in Texas, which likewise capitulated in about four weeks' time. We were now masters of the whole country, and the war was apparently at an end.

But the Mexicans were not the people to give up their best province so easily. They have too much of the old Spanish character about them—that determined obstinacy

which sustained the Spaniards during their protracted struggle against the Moors. The honour of their republic was compromised, and that must be redeemed. Thundering proclamations were issued, denouncing the Texians as rebels, who should be swept off the face of the earth, and threatening the United States for having aided us with money and volunteers. Ten thousand of the best troops in Mexico entered Texas, and were shortly to be followed by ten thousand more. The President, General Santa Anna, himself came to take the command, attended by a numerous and brilliant staff.

The Texians laughed at the fanfarronades of the dons, and did not attach sufficient importance to these formidable preparations. Their good opinion of themselves, and contempt of their foes, had been increased to an unreasonable degree by their recent and rapid successes. They forgot that the troops to which they had hitherto been opposed were for the most part militia, and that those now advancing against them were of a far better description, and had probably better powder. The call to arms made by our president, Burnet, was disregarded by many, and we could only get together about two thousand men, of whom nearly two-thirds had to be left to garrison the forts of Goliad and Alamo. In the first named place we left seven hundred and sixty men, under the command of Fanning; in the latter, something more than five hundred. With the remaining seven or eight hundred, we took the field.

The Mexicans advanced so rapidly, that they were upon us before we were aware of it, and we were compelled to retreat, leaving the garrisons of the two forts to their fate, and a right melancholy one it proved to be.

One morning news was brought to Goliad, that a number of country people, principally women and children, were on their way to the fort, closely pursued by the Mexicans. Fanning, losing sight of prudence in his compassion for these poor people, immediately ordered a battalion of five hundred men, under the command of Major Ward, to go and meet the fugitives and escort them in. The major, and several officers of the garrison, doubted as to the propriety of this measure; but Fanning, full of sympathy for his unprotected countrywomen, insisted, and the battalion moved out. They soon came in sight of the fugitives, as they thought, but on drawing

nearer, the latter turned out to be Mexican dragoons, who sprang upon their horses, which were concealed in the neighbouring islands of trees, and a desperate fight began. The Mexicans, far superior in numbers, received every moment accessions to their strength. The Louis-Potosi and Santa Fé cavalry, fellows who seem born on horse-back, were there. Our unfortunate countrymen were hemmed in on all sides. The fight lasted two days, and only two men out of the five hundred escaped with their lives.

Before the news of this misfortune reached us, orders had been sent to Fanning to evacuate the fort and join us with six pieces of artillery. He received the order, and proceeded to execute it. But what might have been very practicable for eight hundred and sixty men, was impossible for three hundred and sixty. Nevertheless, Fanning began his march through the prairie. His little band was almost immediately surrounded by the enemy. After a gallant defence, which lasted twelve hours, they succeeded in reaching an island, but scarcely had they established themselves there, when they found that their ammunition was expended. There was nothing left for them, but to accept the terms offered by the Mexicans, who pledged themselves, that if they laid down their arms, they should be permitted to return to their homes. But the rifles were no sooner piled, than the Texians found themselves charged by their treacherous foes, who butchered them without mercy. Only an advanced post of three men succeeded in escaping.

The five hundred men whom we had left in San Antonio de Bexar, fared no better. Not being sufficiently numerous to hold out the town as well as the Alamo, they retreated into the latter. The Mexican artillery soon laid a part of the fort in ruins. Still its defenders held out. After eight days' fighting, during which the loss of the besiegers was tremendously severe, the Alamo was taken, and not a single Texian left alive.

We thus, by these two cruel blows, lost two-thirds of our army, and little more than seven hundred men remained to resist the numerous legions of our victorious foe. The prospect before us was one well calculated to daunt the stoutest heart.

The Mexican general, Santa Anna, moved his army forward in two divisions, one stretching along the coast towards Velasco, the other advancing towards San Felipe de Austin. He himself, with a small force, marched

in the centre. At Fort Bend, twenty miles below San Felipe, he crossed the Brazos, and shortly afterwards established himself with about fifteen hundred men in an entrenched camp. Our army, under the command of General Houston, was in front of Harrisburg, to which place the congress had retreated.

It was on the night of the twentieth of April, and our whole disposable force, some seven hundred men, was bivouacking in and about an island of sycamores. It was a cloudy, stormy evening: a high wind was blowing, and the branches of the trees groaned and creaked above our heads. The weather harmonized well enough with our feelings, which were sad and desponding when we thought of the desperate state of our cause. We (the officers) were sitting in a circle round the general and Alcalde, both of whom appeared uneasy and anxious. More than once they got up, and walked backwards and forwards, seemingly impatient, and as if they were waiting for or expecting something. There was a deep silence throughout the whole bivouac; some were sleeping, and those who watched were in no humour for idle chat.

"Who goes there?" suddenly shouted one of the sentries. The answer we did not hear, but it was apparently satisfactory, for there was no further challenge, and a few seconds afterwards an orderly came up, and whispered something in the ear of the Alcalde. The latter hurried away, and, presently returning, spoke a few words in a low tone to the general, and then to us officers. In an instant we were all upon our feet. In less than ten minutes, the bivouac was broken up, and our little army on the march.

All our people were well mounted, and armed with rifles, pistols, and bowie-knives. We had six field-pieces, but we only took four, harnessed with twice the usual number of horses. We marched at a rapid trot the whole night, led by a tall, gaunt figure of a man who acted as our guide, and kept some distance in front. I more than once asked the Alcalde who this was. "You will know by and by," was his answer.

Before daybreak we had ridden five and twenty miles, but had been compelled to abandon two more guns. As yet, no one knew the object of this forced march. The general commanded a halt, and ordered the men to refresh and strengthen themselves by food and drink. While they were doing

this, he assembled the officers around him, and the meaning of our night-march was explained to us. The camp in which the Mexican president and general-in-chief had entrenched himself was within a mile of us; General Parza, with two thousand men, was twenty miles further to the rear; General Filasola, with one thousand, eighteen miles lower down on the Brazos; Viesca, with fifteen hundred, twenty-five miles higher up. One bold and decided blow, and Texas might yet be free. There was not a moment to lose, nor was one lost. The general addressed the men.

"Friends! Brothers! Citizens! General Santa Anna is within a mile of us with fifteen hundred men. The hour that is to decide the question of Texian liberty is now arrived. What say you? Do we attack?"

"We do!" exclaimed the men with one voice, cheerfully and decidedly.

In the most perfect stillness, we arrived within two hundred paces of the enemy's camp. The *recilée* of the sleeping Mexicans was the discharge of our two field-pieces loaded with canister. Rushing on to within twenty-five paces of the entrenchment, we gave them a deadly volley from our rifles, and then, throwing away the latter, bounded up the breastworks, a pistol in each hand. The Mexicans, scared and stupefied by this sudden attack, were running about in the wildest confusion, seeking their arms, and not knowing which way to turn. After firing our pistols, we threw them away as we had done our rifles, and, drawing our bowie-knives, fell, with a shout, upon the masses of the terrified foe. It was more like the boarding of a ship than any land fight I had ever seen or imagined.

My station was on the right of the line, where the breastwork, ending in a redoubt, was steep and high. I made two attempts to climb up, but both times slipped back. On the third trial I nearly gained the summit; but was again slipping down, when a hand seized me by the collar, and pulled me up on the bank. In the darkness and confusion I did not distinguish the face of the man who rendered me this assistance. I only saw the glitter of a bayonet which a Mexican thrust into his shoulder, at the very moment he was helping me up. He neither flinched nor let go his hold of me till I was fairly on my feet; then, turning slowly round, he levelled a pistol at the soldier, who, at that very moment, was struck down by the Alcalde.

"No thanks to ye, squire!" exclaimed the man, in a voice which made me start, even at that moment of excitement and bustle. I looked at the speaker, but could only see his back, for he had already plunged into the thick of the fight, and was engaged with a party of Mexicans, who defended themselves desperately. He fought like a man more anxious to be killed than to kill, striking furiously right and left, but never guarding a blow, though the Alcalde, who was by his side, warded off several which were aimed at him.

By this time my men had scrambled up after me. I looked round to see where our help was most wanted, and was about to lead them forward, when I heard the voice of the Alcalde.

"Are you badly hurt, Bob?" said he in an anxious tone.

I glanced at the spot whence the voice came. There lay Bob Rock, covered with blood, and apparently insensible. The Alcalde was supporting his head on his arm. Before I had time to give a second look I was hurried forward with the rest towards the centre of the camp, where the fight was at the hottest.

About five hundred men, the pick of the Mexican army, had collected round a knot of staff-officers, and were making a most gallant defence. General Houston had attacked them with three hundred of our people, but had not been able to break their ranks. His charge, however, had shaken them a little, and, before they had time to recover from it, I came up. Giving a wild hurrah, my men fired their pistols, hurled them at their enemies' heads, and then springing over the carcasses of the fallen, dashed like a thunder-bolt into the broken ranks of the Mexicans.

A frightful butchery ensued. Our men, who were for the most part, and at most times, peaceable and humane in disposition, seemed converted into perfect fiends. Whole ranks of the enemy fell under their knives. Some idea may be formed of the horrible slaughter from the fact, that the fight, from beginning to end, did not last above ten minutes, and in that time nearly eight hundred Mexicans were shot or cut down. "No quarter!" was the cry of the infuriated assailants: "Remember Alamo! Remember Goliad! Think of Fanning, Ward!" The Mexicans threw themselves on their knees, imploring mercy. "*Misericordia! Cuartel, por el amor de Dios!*" shrieked they in heart-rending tones;



but their supplications were not listened to, and every man of them would inevitably have been butchered, had not General Houston and the officers dashed in between the victors and the vanquished, and with the greatest difficulty, and by threats of cutting down our own men if they did not desist, put an end to this scene of bloodshed, and saved the Texian character from the stain of unmanly cruelty.

When all was over, I hurried back to the place where I had left the Alcalde with Bob—the latter lay, bleeding from six wounds, only a few paces from the spot where he had helped me up the breastwork. The bodies of two dead Mexicans served him for a pillow. The Alcalde was kneeling by his side, gazing sadly and earnestly into the face of the dying man.

For Bob was dying; but it was no longer the death of the despairing murderer. The expression of his features was calm and composed, and his eyes were raised to heaven with a look of hope and supplication.

I stooped down and asked him how he felt himself, but he made no answer, and evidently did not recollect me. After a minute or two,

"How goes it with the fight?" he asked in a broken voice.

"We have conquered, Bob. The enemy killed or taken. Not a man escaped."

He paused a little, and then spoke again.

"Have I done my duty? May I hope to be forgiven?"

The Alcalde answered him in an agitated voice.

"He who forgave the sinner on the cross, will doubtless be merciful to you, Bob. His holy book says: There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just men. Be of good hope, Bob! the Almighty will surely be merciful to you!"

"Thank ye, squire," gasped Bob, "you're a true friend, a friend in life and in death. Well, it's come at last," said he, while a resigned and happy smile stole over his features. "I've prayed for it long enough. Thank God, it's come at last!"

He gazed up at the Alcalde with a kindly expression of countenance. There was a slight shuddering movement of his whole frame—Bob was dead.

The Alcalde remained kneeling for a short time beside the corpse, his lips moving in prayer. At last he rose to his feet.

"God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wick-

edness and live," said he, in a low and solemn tone. "I had those words in my thoughts four years ago, when I cut him down from the branch of the Patriarch."

"Four years ago!" cried I. "Then *you* cut him down, and were in time to save him! Was it he who yesterday brought us the news of the vicinity of the foe?"

"It was, and much more than that has he done," replied the Alcalde, no longer striving to conceal the tears that fell from his eyes. "For four years has he dragged on his wretched existence, weary of the world, and despised of all men. For four years has he served us, lived, fought, and spied for us, without honour, reward, hope, or consolation—without a single hour of tranquillity, or a wish for aught except death. All this to serve Texas and his countrymen. Who shall say this man was not a true patriot? God will surely be merciful to his soul," said the Alcalde after a pause.

"I trust he will," answered I, deeply affected.

We were interrupted at this moment by a message from General Houston, to whom we immediately hastened. All was uproar and confusion. Santa Anna could not be found amongst the prisoners.

This was a terrible disappointment, for the capture of the Mexican president had been our principal object, and the victory we had gained was comparatively unimportant if he escaped. Indeed, the hope of putting an end to the war by his capture, had more than any thing encouraged and stimulated us to the unequal conflict.

The moment was a very critical one. Amongst our men were some thirty or forty most desperate characters, who began handling their knives, and casting looks upon the prisoners, the meaning of which it was impossible to mistake. Selecting some of our trustiest men, we stationed them as a guard over the captives, and, having thus assured the safety of the latter, began questioning them as to what had become of their general.

They had none of them seen Santa Anna since the commencement of the fight, and it was clear that he must have made his escape while we were getting over the breastworks. He could not be very far off, and we at once took measures to find him. A hundred men were sent off with the prisoners to Harrisburg, and a hundred others, capably mounted on horses found in the Mexican camp, started to scour the country in search of the fugi-

tive chief. I accompanied the latter detachment.

We had been twelve hours in the saddle, and had ridden over nearly a hundred miles of ground. We began to despair of finding the game we were in quest of, and were thinking of abandoning the chase, when at a distance of about seven miles from the camp, one of our most experienced hunters discovered the print of a small and delicate boot upon some soft ground leading to a marsh. Following this trail, it at last led us to a man sunk up to his waist in the swamp, and so covered with mud and filth, as to be quite unrecognizable. We drew him from his hiding-place, half dead with cold and terror, and, having washed the dirt from his face, we found him to be a man of about forty years of age, with blue eyes, of a mild, but crafty expression; a narrow, high forehead; long, thin nose, rather fleshy at the tip; projecting upper lip, and long chin. These features tallied too exactly with the description we had had of the Mexican president, for us to doubt that our prisoner was Santa Anna himself.

The only thing that at all tended to shake this conviction, was the extraordinary politeness of our new captive. He threw himself on his knees, begging us, in the name of God and all the saints, to spare his life. Our reiterated assurances and promises were insufficient to convince him of his being in perfect safety, or to induce him to adopt a demeanour more consistent with his dignity and high station.

The events which succeeded this fortunate capture are too well known to require more than a very brief recapitulation. The same evening a truce was agreed upon between Houston and Santa Anna, the latter sending orders to his different generals to retire upon San Antonio de Bexar, and other places in the direction of the Mexican frontier. These orders, valueless as emanating from a prisoner, most of the generals were weak or cowardly enough to obey, an obedience for which they were afterwards brought to trial by the Mexican congress. In a few days, two-thirds of Texas were in our possession.

The news of these successes brought crowds of volunteers to our standard. In three weeks, we had an army of several thousand men, with which we advanced against the Mexicans. There was no more fighting, however, for our antagonists had had enough, and allowed themselves to be driven from

one position to another, till, in a month's time, there was not one of them left in the country.

The Struggle was over, and Texas was Free!

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From the Charivari.

### THE COMIC BLACKSTONE.

OF THE KING'S (OR QUEEN'S) DUTIES.

WE now come to the duties of the sovereign, which will form a very short chapter, though the prerogative which comes next will not be so briefly disposed of. The principal duty of the sovereign is to govern according to law, which is no such easy matter, when it is considered how frightfully uncertain the law is, and how difficult it must be to govern according to any thing so horridly dubious. Bracton, who wrote in the time of Henry the Third—and a nice time he had of it—declares that the king is subject to nothing on earth; but Henry the Eighth was subject to the gout, and Queen Anne is thought to have been subject to chilblains. Fortescue, who was the Archbold of his day, and was always bringing out law books, tells us the important fact that “the king takes an oath at his coronation, and is bound to keep it;” but *semble*, say we, that if he did not choose to keep it he could not be had up at the Old Bailey for perjury. Fortescue deserves “a pinch for stale news,” which was the school-boy penalty, in our time, for very late intelligence.

To obviate all doubts and difficulties, a statute was passed in the reign of William the Third, which rendered matters more doubtful and more difficult. It was enacted that the “laws of England are the birthright of the people;” but there is such a thundering legacy duty, in the shape of costs, that few people like to administer and take possession of their precious birthright. The statute further goes on to say, that “all kings and queens *ought*” to do so and so, and that “all officers and ministers *ought* to” do this, that, and the other; but, as Coke quaintly says in his dog French, “*ought est sur son pied pour reang*” (*ought is upon its feet*, the canine Norman or dog French for *stands, pour reang* for nothing).

The duties of the sovereign are briefly set forth in the Coronation oath, which is arranged as a duet for the archbishop or bishop and the sovereign. There is, however, some-

press one single idea which reigns here every where—war maintained by fear. The Kremlin is the work of a superhuman being, but that being is malevolent. Glory in slavery—such is the allegory figured by this satanic monument, as extraordinary in architecture as the visions of St. John are in poetry. It is a habitation which would suit some of the personages of the Apocalypse. In vain is each turret distinguished by its peculiar character and its particular use; all have the same signification,—terror armed. Some resemble the caps of priests, others the mouth of a dragon, others swords, their points in the air, others the forms and even the colours of various fruits; some again represent a headdress of the czars, pointed, and adorned with jewels like that of the Doge of Venice; others are simple crowns; and all this multitude of towers of glazed tiles, of metallic cupolas, of enamelled, gilded, azured, and silvered domes, shine in the sun like the colossal stalactites of the salt-mines in the neighbourhood of Cracow. These enormous pillars, these towers and turrets of every shape, pointed, pyramidal, and circular, but always in some manner suggesting the idea of the human form, seem to reign over the city and the land. To see them from afar shining in the sky, one might fancy them an assembly of potentates, richly-robed and decorated with the insignia of their dignity, a meeting of ancestral beings, a council of kings, each seated upon his tomb; spectres hovering over the pinnacles of a palace. To inhabit a place like the Kremlin is not to reside, it is to defend one's self. Oppression creates revolt, revolt obliges precautions, precautions increase dangers, and this long series of actions and reactions engenders a monster; that monster is despotism, which has built itself a house at Moscow. The giants of the antediluvian world, were they to return to earth to visit their degenerate successors, might still find a suitable habitation in the Kremlin. Every thing has a symbolical sense, whether purposely or not, in its architecture; but the real, the abiding, that appears after you have divested yourself of your first emotions in the contemplation of these barbaric splendours, is, after all, only a congregation of dungeons pompously surnamed palaces and cathedrals. The Russians may do their best, but they can never come out of the prison. The very climate is an accomplice of tyranny. The cold of the country does not permit the con-

struction of vast churches, where the faithful would be frozen at prayer: here the soul is not lifted to heaven by the glories of religious architecture; in this zone man can only build to his God gloomy donjons. The sombre cathedrals of the Kremlin, with their narrow vaults and thick walls, resemble caves; they are painted prisons, just as the palaces are gilded gaols. As travellers say of the recesses of the Alps, so of the wonders of this architecture—they are horribly beautiful."

But the conversion of cathedrals into something like prisons, and preventing discussion even in the pulpits, have not saved the Russian church from dissent. An intelligent nobleman assured the Marquis that there was a countless variety of sects in Russia. Profligacy of manners might naturally be expected in a land where religious and moral discussion is prohibited, on account of its approaching too nearly to reason and argument. The Marquis has given anecdotes of the licentiousness of nuns, the orgies of noble profligates, and the disregard for all the decencies of life in aristocratic *réunions*.

Although the Marquis was unable to obtain permission to inspect the state prison, one of his countrymen had the misfortune to awaken the jealous suspicions of the Russian police by some incautious act or expression—what, he never was able to ascertain. He was thrown into a cell, separated only by a slight partition from the place where the unhappy slaves are tortured at the command of their masters. His gaolers must have believed that M. Pernet had no chance of liberation, or they never would have given him such an opportunity of witnessing the fearful secrets of the prison house and the unmitigated exercise of the rod.

"Mr. Pernet understands Russian; he was therefore present, without seeing any thing, at many private tortures; among others, at those of two young girls, who worked under a fashionable milliner at Moscow. These unfortunate creatures were flogged before the eyes even of their mistress, who reproached them with having lovers, and with having so far forgotten themselves as to bring them into her house—the house of a milliner!—what an enormity! Meanwhile this virago exhorted the executioner to strike harder: one of the girls begged for mercy: they said that she was nearly killed, that she was covered with blood! No matter! She had carried her audacity so far as to

say that she was less culpable than her mistress; and the latter redoubled her severity. M. Pernet assured me, observing that he thought I might doubt his assertion, that each of the unhappy girls received, at different intervals, a hundred and eighty blows. 'I suffered too much in counting them,' he added, 'to be deceived in the number.' A man feels the approach of insanity when present at such horrors, and yet unable to succour the victims. Afterwards, serfs and servants were brought by stewards, or sent by their masters, with the request that they might be punished: there was nothing, in short, but scenes of atrocious vengeance and frightful despair, all hidden from the public eye. The unhappy prisoner longed for the obscurity of night, because the darkness brought with it silence; and though his thoughts then terrified him, he preferred the evils of imagination to those of reality."

M. Pernet was liberated by the interference of the French ambassador, to whom our author communicated his case; he was liberated without a word of explanation, and commanded to quit Russia without delay.

We shall now take leave of M. de Custine. His style is much too high flown to suit our sober taste; but his book will help to show that the Russian empire is maintained by a system of dissimulation and hypocrisy, enforced by cruelty and terror, to conceal the secret of its internal rottenness. In the greatest excitement of Russo-phobia some years ago, we maintained that the alarm was unfounded, and that Russia had not the elements by which the country can be raised to universal empire. Voltaire discovered, and Napoleon proved its internal weakness; the elements, not valour, destroyed the French invaders; English gold and not their own energies brought the Russians to encamp in Paris. Most travellers who have hitherto described the empire have been military men, and they have been led away by the military discipline which reigns every where. They have more or less of the officer's prejudice, that strict drill makes good soldiers; and they are ignorant of the moral loss that is incurred when men are degraded to machines. Men of the camp over-rated Russia, because it appeared to them an empire of camp; had they gone a step further and asked some questions respecting the commissariat and finance, they would have made considerable abatements in their estimate of Moscovite strength and grandeur.

From Bentley's Miscellany.

## THE HUNTING WIDOW;

OR, A WEEK IN THE WOODS AND PRAIRIES OF TEXAS.

SOME time towards the close of February last, I took my departure from on board the Texian man-of-war brig, Archer, of eighteen guns, lying in Galveston harbour, on a hunting excursion up the bay of the same name, for the purpose of recruiting myself after a brief cruise to the enemy's coast, with the less-dangerous pursuit of the deer, the opossum, the raccoon, and other game, with which the prairies and woodlands of this favoured offshoot of Mexico abounds.

The craft in which, as with Yankee caution it was expressed, we "calculated to progress," was the brig's six-oar cutter, rigged into a sail-boat; it contained our guns, horns, shot-pouches, a keg of powder, bags of ball and shot, our blankets, "fixing" for a tent, a demi-john of water, a few bottles of American whiskey, a small sack of biscuit, certain pieces of salt-beef, some coffee and sugar, and ample provisions for the day's journey, as well as an "extensive supply" of tobacco. My companions were Captain Todd, Lieutenant Snow, Judge Bollant, Mr. Baker, and two young midshipmen, who had entered, for glory's sake the service of the young republic.

The costume of the party was, for the country and the occasion, perfectly suitable and characteristic, but to an European sufficiently novel; my American friends were cased in pantaloons "of rugged woollen," the nether extremities were tucked in their thick hunting boots, and attached in that position by a rope-yarn; their heads were surmounted by broad-brimmed white felt hats, while a jacket, over which was thrown the picturesque poncho, or Mexican blanket, in addition to the usual amalgamation of arms, horns, shot-bags, &c. completed their hunting habiliments. I myself, though but recently from a land of civilization, yet felt sufficiently the force of example, and the utter destruction of all "correct clothing," to be habited in all things the same, save only that my poncho was Peruvian, and my head surmounted by a sou'-wester, something between a shovel-hat and a coal-heaver's tarpaulin.

The bay at the moment of our departure was covered with a dense and piercing fog, which rendered every object invisible at the distance of little more than twenty yards.

We were to leeward of our brig on starting, and scarcely had we propelled our boat so that the sails were filled, and our long red and blue pennant unfurled to the wind by a somewhat stiff breeze, when the vessel in our rear was out of sight, just as the sound of a long twenty-four died upon our ears; next moment another solid object presented itself to our view, and before we could rightly hear and respond unto the cheerful hail of a light-hearted Frenchman, we had shot across the bows of the brig *Nomade*, of Agde, appearing like a spectral ship upon the ocean, her spars all dripping with wet.

I now proceeded to load a pipe, manufactured in Texan fashion from a reed and an Indian corn-cob scooped out, and then lit it according to the custom of the country. A musket was loosely charged with a small supply of cotton for wadding, gently inserted upon the top of the powder, and fired into the bottom of the boat, and the burning cotton being picked up, our *chibouques*, *meerschauts*, or whatever less aspiring name the reader is pleased to give them, then went through the process of illumination, and we were all in the portals of paradise. Soothed by the influence of the weed, certainly less odoriferous than the "careanets of rose pastilles"\* worn by the ladies of Hellas, but not less pleasing in its effects, I awaited the result of our peregrination in that state of happy indifference as to where we brought up for the night, satisfied that game would every where be found. I then very gravely drew forth my ramrod, and sounded with it once or twice as we proceeded, and found by the scant water obtained, that we were on the centre of Pelican Shoal. While the rest were occupied in tying reef-points, the helm was resigned to me, and in about five minutes the vicinity of land was made manifest by the rising of a vast cloud of birds, whose loud screams testified their annoyance at our approach. Next moment I discovered looming through the fog, the dim outline of certain palmettos and prickly pears, indicating our landfall to be the large oyster pond on Pelican Island, so called from the vast body of pelicans and cranes which congregate upon and around it. Steering a more westerly course, we soon rounded Shell-bank's Point, and entered upon the open bay, where every now and then the ghostly outline of some boat at anchor met our gaze, and the hoarse sound of welcome and adieu was

sounded across the waters. Now and then a song, either in French, German, or English would catch our ears, warning us ere we could see it, of our proximity to the different craft. Ours was the only boat in motion; we only having a compass.

About two hours of a stiff breeze, which carried us gloriously along, a squall or so now and then disturbing us, enabled me to run in close under Dollar Point, the site of an (*intended*) town (*to be*) called *Austinia*, of which a few houses were once built, but being removed wholesale to San Luis, the notion was abandoned. Here we were purposing to take refectation, when our keel grated harshly, and next instant we were fast aground upon Oyster Reef, over which I expected to find sullicient water. The whole of Galveston Bay, abounding, as it does, in other fish, is yet more plentifully supplied with vast and inexhaustible beds of the most delicious oysters, lying about two or three feet below the surface, from five to twenty in a bunch. One man can, with ease, collect a thousand in an hour. In shape and size they differ from those generally seen in Europe, being long, narrow, and they are eaten only in two or three mouthfuls. Their flavour, particularly when aided by the peppered vinegar so universally used in all parts of Mexico, is most delicious; and oyster stews, fries, and soups, as well as pickles, form a great portion of the food of the inhabitants.

Determined to make the best of a difficulty, we unsheathed our knives, as if to eat a way across the reef, and proceeded in good earnest to add oysters to our morning-meal. Our "white nigger," as any thing in the shape of an European servant is elegantly denominated in the refined vocabulary of Texas, soon gathered two or three hundred, and taking from a box the larger half of a stray juvenile boar, which had paid the debt of nature under one of our rifles the preceding day, with molasses for sauce, and Indian corn-cakes, I can assure my readers we made a hearty meal.

Breakfast concluded, we very coolly took to the water, not, however, without some expectation of encountering an alligator, also in search of a morning meal. The boat, relieved of our weight, rose buoyantly, and we led it over the oyster-bank; had the day been warm, and the water smooth, there would have been nothing disagreeable in this involuntary bath, but the fog was piercingly cold, and a short sea breaking over the bank,

\* St. John's "Ancient Greece," vol. iii. p. 137.

wetted us from head to foot. Re-entering our boat, we passed through a narrow channel between two islands, and found ourselves in Edward's Bay, where, under the shelter of the land, the breeze fell considerably, and we shook the reefs out of our sails. Just as this was done the wind shifted a few points, the fog rolled away, leaving free passage to the sun's rays, which speedily dried our dripping garments, and about midday I had the satisfaction of seeing the anchor fall at the mouth of Clare Creek, where we resolved to commence operations.

The spot was sufficiently picturesque, both banks of the river or creek being shaded by lofty trees, with here and there a green opening, overhung by the branches of the cedar, the live-oak, the elm, the haematack, while yuppān and peccān bushes, and hickory-trees, fill up the intermediate spaces between the larger trunks; here and there a wild lemon tree, or the lofty-climbing vine, met the eye, or, casting it some little distance above, it rested upon a grove of young pine-trees, with their deep-green hue, extending far out of sight, until hidden by a bend of the river. Having selected for our camp a slightly-elevated opening, we commenced a clearance, and by cutting stakes and poles, with the aid of our sails, certain tarpaulins, and a spare top gallant sail, brought for the purpose, we soon contemplated in silent admiration the work of our own hands. A large fire was instantly set on foot, and the whole party then dispersed in various directions in search of game. I, and Midshipman Smith, "sloped" together, he having whispered that he would show me some fine sport without much trouble. Wild-fowl, as most comeatable, was what we first sought, in order to obtain a supply for immediate consumption. Shouldering my heavy double-barrelled gun, I followed my little, active, and intelligent guide along the left banks of the river, for a distance of about two hundred yards, when he sat down upon a log, and I followed his example. He knew that information relative to the country, as well as the character of its inhabitants, was peculiarly my delight, and accordingly informed me that, until the last nine months, he had resided on Clare Creek, in the house of one Esther Simmons, and added, that he was sure I would like to see her; but the visit was deferred by me until the next day.

"I guess," said he, with the rich nasal twang of a true Yankee, as soon as I had made up my mind, "we'll have some sport

anyhow; for when I left I stowed my Indian canoe, where I'd venture to calculate, it has never been found; and, now for it, to cross Clare Creek, and walk into the ducks."

At the conclusion of this speech, which rather surprised me, Mr. Smith rose, and walking down the gently sloping bank to the water's edge, suspended his "copposity" in mid-air, lowered himself down amid a thick, overhanging bush, and then disappearing, presently shot forth, paddling a small Indian canoe, or dug-out, of size barely sufficient to carry two persons and their equipments. Placing our arms carefully in the bottom of the boat, I cautiously entered the fragile bark, and seating myself, was soon paddled to the opposite side. Making fast the painter of our little canoe, we landed, and pushing aside the somewhat thick undergrowth with my left hand, grasping in my right my fowling piece, I followed Mr. Smith, and, after a quarter of an hour's journey through close timber, we came in sight of one of the numerous and extraordinarily inhabited ponds so common in the lower and more swampy portions of the coast of Texas. The lagoon itself was skirted by the extreme edge of the wood; beyond spread the interminable prairie, flat, smooth as the calm sea, unbroken by any elevation. The surface of the water was, at the moment we approached, completely hidden by ducks, both the diver, the canvas-back, and the common kind, as well as a pretty considerable number of geese. Having with great caution ensconced ourselves at the distance of about forty yards, we startled them by a loud cry, and as the immense body of fowls rose like a thick cloud, they received the contents of four barrels, loaded with a mixture of small and swan-shot. We had chosen our positions admirably, for eleven ducks and two geese rewarded our exertions.

Collecting our prizes, we now retraced our steps, the more readily as we heard several shots fired on the opposite side, and from experience I knew that there other game had been captured. Though we were first at the camp, yet, as the rest dropped in we found our anticipations verified. Captain Tod had killed an opossum; Mr. Baker, a squirrel and two snipes; Judge B——, several ducks; while Lieutenant Snow was empty-handed, and Midshipman Goodall had "scotched, but not killed" a deer. A huge iron pot, suspended from branches above, over a blazing fire, was now put into requisition, into which, after due skinning and plucking, the

whole amount of our chase was indiscriminately cast, to form a stew; to the above a portion of navy beef was added, by way of salt, while Indian corn-meal, and a few sweet potatoes, added not a little to the promised delicacy of our ragout. Certain it is that our Man-Friday, or Leo Americanus, as he was called, from his extensive progression over the New Continent, assured us that the result of his *cuisine* would be "first-rate."

The preparation of our stew, the careful decoction of our mocha, or Rathee Havanna beans, occupied our time and our thoughts so exclusively, that, suddenly raising our eyes, we discovered the sun slowly setting in the west, its rays peering somewhat feebly through the dense mass of foliage which surrounded us. We accordingly supped by the light of a blazing fire of pine and oak logs, which some considerate individual had cut down close at hand, for the less useful purpose, however, of conveying them to Galveston for sale. The only interruption during our meals was the howling of certain *caictoe*, whom the savoury odour of our mess had caused to congregate around. I scarcely ever enjoyed a meal with more *gusto*. Hunger, and the good things before me, so engrossed my attention, that the wolves were for the time unheeded; and, when at length three or four pounds of the stew had been despatched by each of us, we were far too lazy to rise and trouble ourselves by interfering with the noisy neighbours, who promised by their guttural concert to disturb our slumbers. A pipe of the aromatic weed, as well as the charms of conversation, were to us more powerful influences than the desire of slaughter.

My companions at length fell off one by one to sleep; but, pouring out a cup of coffee, I replenished my pipe, and wandered into imagination within sight of the metropolis of the world, on the banks of Father Thames, with those who, though many thousand miles from me, were ever uppermost in my thoughts. I was aroused from a sadly-pleasant reverie by the howling of wolves, somewhat too near me to be agreeable; starting up, therefore, I fired my gun, heavily loaded with buck-shot, in the direction whence the noise proceeded, and then, my vision being scattered, heaped on fresh logs, and resigned myself to slumber.

I awoke, after a few hours' rest, and found Man-Friday and Mid. Smith busily engaged in preparing for breakfast: I arose, and lent a hand by "alembicating" the Havanna. In a few minutes the keen senses of the slum-

berers, catching hold of the fragrant odour meandering through the air, and "the rage of hunger," to use an Homeric phrase, was called into action. Every thing was now bustle: our beds and blankets were rolled up, and converted into stools, and in a few minutes a hunter's morning meal was despatched. Our guns were now shouldered, and the camp was deserted, each following the bent of his inclinations. I and Mr. Smith prepared to pay our promised visit to Esther Simmons, better known as the "hunting widow." During our progress towards her wigwam, I received in detail a history of the circumstances from which had arisen her present anomalous position. Smith himself was an orphan, who had been reared by the Simmons family, and informed me that, some four years previously, they had resided in the neighbourhood of Austin, some two hundred miles in the interior, expecting to end their days in the wilds, unless, perchance, a settlement should form around them. One afternoon Smith came running with the startling intelligence that a party of Cumanche Indians were advancing towards the house, having killed a negro, who had been busily engaged in a small inclosed field planting sweet potatoes.

The hut of the Simmonses was situated on the extreme point of a kind of delta, formed by the conjunction of two small rivers, which here, in consequence, first became navigable. The front of the house opened upon a small "burn," skirted at the distance of some two hundred yards, by a fine wood; while the rear was on the edge of a sloping bank, which led down to the water's edge, where lay a moderate-sized piroque, partly concealed by bushes, and utterly out of view to any one approaching from the timber above alluded to. Defence appearing out of the question, immediate preparations were made for escape; but this hope was frustrated by the sudden appearance from a forest path of some dozen well-armed and well-mounted Cumanches. The crack, the flash of the Western rifle followed, and the foremost of the Indians, who had evidently expected to gain admission under the guise of seeking hospitality, fell to the ground to rise no more. The Indians, as was their wont, retreated, and halted at a somewhat more respectable distance. By this time the children had been removed to the canoe, where they were for the moment told to remain quiet. The Cumanches now commenced a rapid fire on the house from three different directions, which were

severally answered by loud reports from the rifles of the mother and father, as well as of my young friend Smith. Mrs. Simmons had, by long acquaintance with the American rifle, become as sure a marksman as any Leather-stocking of them all. Animated by the combined feelings of love for her offspring and her husband, she, with steady aim and unbending firmness, pointed the terrible weapon, which dealt death round.

The patience of the Indians is a matter of notoriety, and the inhabitants of the log-hut saw that a determined siege was about to be kept up, the result of which, when night came to aid their designs, could not remain doubtful. With infinite pain and sorrow the young husband and wife, who for seven years had been one another's only hope and joy, agreed to part; the mother to escape with her children to some safe retreat, while the husband kept the Indians at bay, resolved, if necessary, to perish for those who were so dear to him. The scene, as artlessly and simply described to me by Smith, must have been of terrible interest; the young wife and mother was now dealing death around her in defence of her home, the next minute weeping in her husband's arms.

Presently Esther would be recalled to a sense of her position by the crack of rifles, the whistling of arrows, which fell, however, harmless in the centre of massive logs, amid the treble shingles which formed the roof of the hut. In fact, at this moment there was little danger; but soon day began to give signs of its departure, and in desperate agony the father and mother separated. Heart-breaking, no doubt, were Esther's sobs, as, followed in sullen silence by young Smith, she stealthily, still holding fast the American rifle, crept to the water's edge, and the young father remained alone. That night, and part of the next day, the fugitives travelled without intermission, Esther and Smith propelling the piroque in turns. The journey about mid-day closed, by their reaching a small settlement on the mouth of the river which fell into the Colorado. Commending anxiously her children to the care of friends, Esther remarked to Smith, that her maternal duties having been performed, she would now only remember she was a wife. Borrowing a smaller canoe than she had come in, and taking a supply of provisions at the earnest request of the women who surrounded her, the men being out in search of the very Indians she had fled from, she started back alone to ascertain the fate of her hus-

band. As I afterwards learned from her own mouth, she had no idea of fatigue, no thought of want of rest, but continued paddling her canoe, until the next morning brought her once more to her home. What her sensations were, as, on arriving near, a blackened burning mass of ruins met her eye, untenanted of aught living, it is easier for the reader to imagine than for me to attempt to describe. The huge logs, of which a Texan hut is usually made, had been all cast down, and still resisted the force of the destructive element.

Esther landed, and sought—she expected to find nought else—the body of her husband. Her expectations were doomed to be verified, for she discovered the corpse, transfixed with arrows, scalped, and stripped of every article of clothing, the wolves busily engaged in devouring it. With steady and unflinching aim she raised the rifle, and laid the foremost of the group low. The very action brought up tumultuous feelings, and vengeance took possession of her soul. “My first thought,” said she afterwards, “was revenge. I could have set out on foot, and followed the murderers to the end of the earth, and never have rested until I had taken every life; but, thank God, the thought of my children, came into my mind, and I yearned to be near them.” She could not, however, bear the idea of leaving her husband's body to be devoured by the wolves; but, taking off the coarse cloak of deer-skin which enveloped her form, she wrapped it around him, and with a desperate determination, which well suited her energetic and noble character, dragged the corpse to the canoe, placed it in it, entered it herself, and commenced her return. On her arriving at the settlement, a burning fever, which had been gradually coming on, overcame her, and her life was some time despaired of.

A few weeks passed, and Esther Simmons, having recovered, took her departure for the coast a broken-hearted woman. From that day she was determined to risk no further contact with the Indians; the idea of losing her children as she had lost her husband was a thought too terrible. In her next retreat the children tilled the ground,\* planted In-

\* The ground in Texas receives, of course, but very little labour, a hoe or mattock being about all the agricultural instruments ever used. Their sowing differs but little from the Indian mode described in Hakluyt (iii. 329): “First for their corn, beginning in one corner of the plot, with a pecker they make a hole, wherein they put four grains, with



dian corn and sweet potatoes, killed pigs, &c.; while the mother, with the rifle on her shoulder, wandered through prairie and wood in search of game of every description. This active state of life was, as she said, indeed necessary to her; it drove from her head thoughts of the past, which came crowding upon her at times with terrible vividness. Such is the substance, in my own words, of what I heard from Mr. Smith, who, as he concluded, exclaimed, "But there she is, and can tell you more about it all herself."

I raised my eyes, and found myself standing in front of a rude log hut, situated in the centre of a lovely glade, a dense forest surrounding it on all sides. Around the house were about four acres\* of cultivated ground, inclosed by a rude fence, to keep off the various depredators, which otherwise would have utterly destroyed whatever crop was planted. Several pigs, of all sizes and colours, with a solitary cow, and a few fowls, were all that appeared animated around the dwelling, in the porch, however, of which sat a woman, still young, of handsome, though somewhat weather-beaten features. Her age I found to be two-and-thirty. She was of the middle height, slightly made, and engaged in the feminine occupation of sewing. I was both surprised and gratified; for her history had prepared me too see her only with the rifle on her shoulder, marching, like another Boadicea, to the conquest of her enemies. Mrs. Simmons rose to meet us. Smith was welcomed most affectionately; while I was introduced as a countryman, and received a most hospitable, and even graceful, invitation to enter and take refreshment. I accordingly followed her, and found within two boys and two girls, of the ages of five, six, nine, and eleven, who instantly placed a stool for me, and proceeded with alacrity to disembarass me of my gun, powder-horn, &c. The walls were hung with a few hunt-

ing implements, coarse habiliments, and venison, as well as pork-hams, always saved to be, at a proper opportunity, exchanged in Galveston for powder, shot, and the only article of clothing necessary to be purchased, red flannel shirts. Esther herself was completely habited in garments of deer-skin, while mocassins covered her feet, above which appeared leggings of the same material.

After some conversation, we displayed to the view of our hostess some ten pounds of powder, a bag of shot, a quantity of lead, as well as a small supply of bread, coffee, and sugar, which we desired to exchange for sweet potatoes and a ham or two. The faint trace of a smile, dim as the shadow cast by the evening star, passed across her dark and expressive countenance, as the latter articles were presented to her view.

"I never see coffee, Mr. S. J., or tea, or sugar, but I think of England. I left it very young; but even now I think how different had been my lot, had I never departed from my native land."

I made some remark of a consolatory nature, and the conversation fell upon other topics, and presently upon her remarkable history, various details of which I received from her own mouth; but I forbore to press her upon so painful a point.

During the day we strolled to several picturesque spots, as well in the woods as in the edge of the prairie, where we started numerous grey and red partridges. Here the fair Diana of this sylvan retreat first displayed to us the unerring nature of her aim, and the great skill she possessed in all the details of the *ars venatica*. Several fat partridges, two rabbits, and a sand-hill crane were the result of her efforts; while about a dozen rice-birds, killed in two volleys with small mustard shot, were all that my luck afforded me. The latter, however, though not much larger than a sparrow, are like balls of fat, and very delicious in taste. About five o'clock we terminated our stroll, though so fascinating was the society of my conductress, that I could have continued it hours longer. Even before I entered the hut the savoury odour of numerous viands assailed my olfactories in a most agreeable manner, and in a few moments I was seated on a solid stool at a smoking board, where a stew of mingled pork and venison, with fried deer's meat, hominy and mush, besides a compound of hot milk and coffee, soon appeased a ravenous appetite. Hominy and

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care that they touch not one another (about an inch asunder,) and cover them with the molde again: there is a yard square between every hole, where, according to discretion here and there, they set as many beanes and peaze."

\* The assertion of Mr. Th. Hariot (Hakluyt, iii. 330), with regard to Virginia, is fully borne out by my experience in Texas. "I can assure you," he says, "that one man may prepare and husband so much ground (having once borne corne before) with less than four-and-twenty hours' labour, as shall yield him victual in a large proportion for a twelve-month, if he have nothing els but that which the same ground will yield; the sayd ground being also but of five-and-twenty yards square."

mush are both prepared from Indian corn, the former from the grain, the latter from the meal, and, to my taste, are exceedingly delicious.

As soon as the dinner was ended, Smith and the whole party of children dispersed in search of pine-knots, preparatory to a fire-hunt, and my hostess and myself proceeded to discuss the merits of that odoriferous weed, of which these parts are the native soil.

During the conversation which ensued, my hostess detailed to me some of her adventures; but I was chief spokesman, as she was eager to hear all that I could tell of dear England, and the many changes which had taken place since her departure. In about two hours the merry foraging party returned, and preparations were made for our expedition. A large frying-pan was first fastened to a stick; in this the pine-knots were placed, and, having been lit, the fiery machine was shouldered by Mrs. Simmons, who grasping her rifle, led the way to a prairie burn. Every spring, as soon as the sun's rays are sufficiently strong to dry up the grass, the inhabitants of the Texian wilderness set fire to the prairie, which "conflagrating" until arrested by various impediments, as a river, swamp, or heavy timber, leaves behind a rich mould, which is soon covered by a short grass, much coveted by the huge herds of deer that wander through this favoured land. The savanna being reached, I for the first time witnessed the extraordinary attraction which this fire possesses for the deer. We had not walked many hundred yards upon the burn before Mrs. Simmons called me to her side, and requested me to look in the direction in which she pointed. I did so, and plainly, amid the almost utter darkness, discerned the shining eye-balls of some animal gazing steadfastly in motionless astonishment at the fire. The sharp ringing crack of a rifle followed, and, running up, we found that, at the distance of upwards of fifty paces, our fair hostess had hit a doe directly between the eyes, and stretched it on the ground.

This kind of hunting is very much practised in Texas; it requires considerable experience, and a most steady hand, as the fire-pan has to be exactly balanced on the right shoulder, and held there, while the rifle is brought up, and steady aim taken. The knots will continue to blaze, so great is the quantity of inflammable material, no matter how much wind exists, giving a bright light;

a calm and dark evening is, however, generally selected for this sport. The eldest boy and girl took possession of our prize, which was a small one, and we proceeding, succeeded in capturing another. Satisfied with the result of our hunt, and the two reports having scared the deer, we returned, and after a hearty supper and a smoke, turned in to sleep, or, rather, we all lay down, and the remaining portion of the inhabitants found repose in slumber. With me, however, the case was far different, for, about twelve o'clock, just as I was composing myself to sleep, the wind, which had been northerly, shifted to the southward, and brought with it a considerable supply of rain; from this, of course, our log hut kept us free, but not from the multitude of mosquitoes, which began to congregate in great numbers, settling upon my head and face, particularly the forehead, in vast numbers. I had neglected to carry about a mosquito-bar, and paid dearly for my carelessness. Morning, with which came a northerly wind, at length dispersed the tormentors, but all hope of sleep had departed.

Meanwhile, my companions, seasoned to the persecutors, had slept soundly, and presently rose refreshed. Mr. Smith now started to the landing, where we had left the canoe, and paddled it up to within two hundred yards of the hut, which was almost in sight of the river. Several bushels of sweet potatoes, and three hams were placed in it, and, bidding adieu to my fair and interesting hostess, with a promise of future visits, I returned to the camp. Subsequent inquiries made me aware that Mrs. Simmons had received several most advantageous offers of marriage, but the memory of the past was not to be eradicated, and every offer had been refused; she had given herself up wholly to her family. Let it not be supposed that her children were utterly rude. On every visit to Galveston she obtained the loan of useful works, the contents of which being imparted to her children, they were returned and exchanged for others; while a Bible, and a considerable number of tracts, the gift of missionaries, remained ever upon her shelves.

Over a plentiful meal it was now agreed that the camp should be broken up, as the rain had wet the hut, and rendered lying on the ground far from pleasant.

P. B. ST. J.

Texian Brig of War, Archer, Galveston  
Harbour, April 27, 1843.











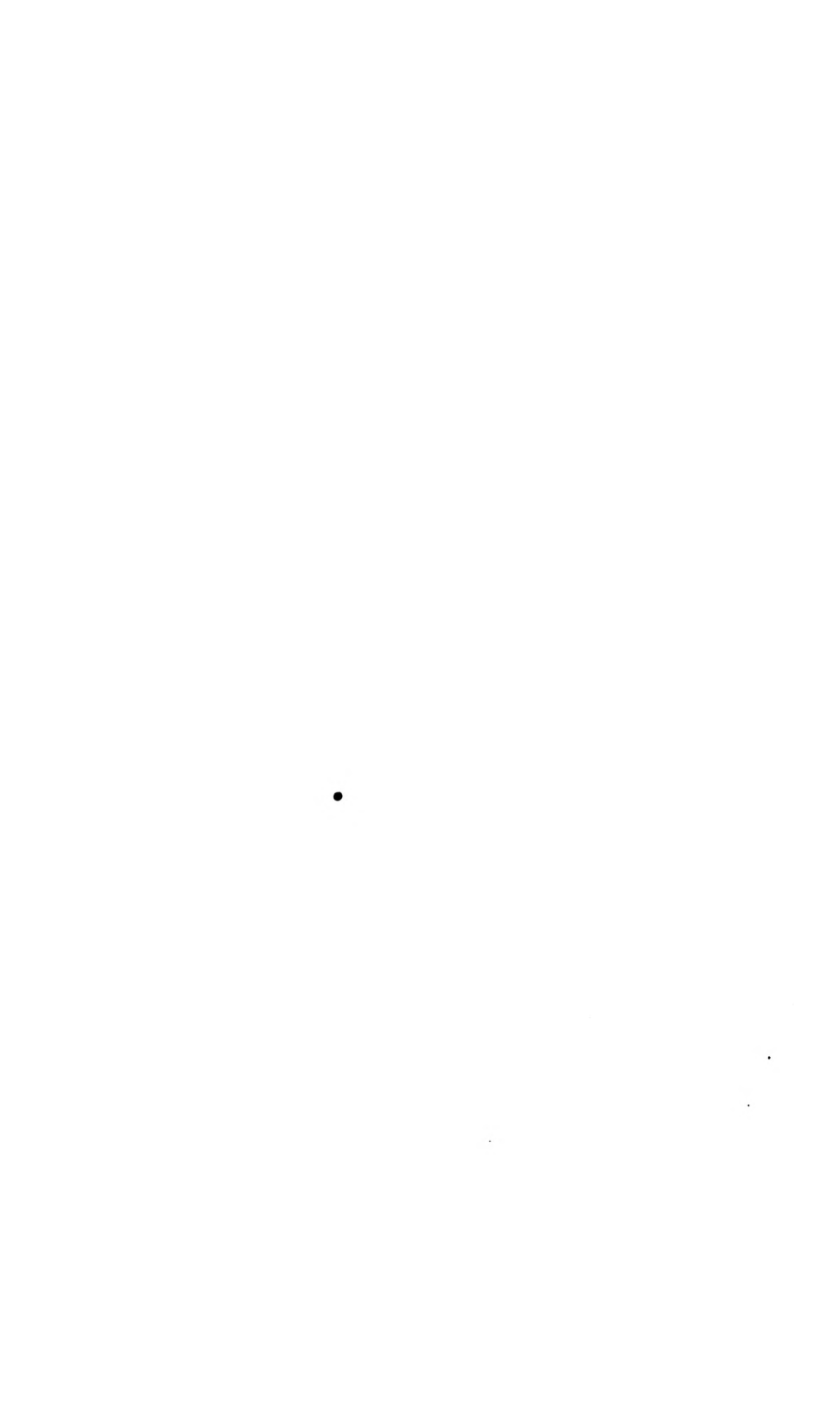
















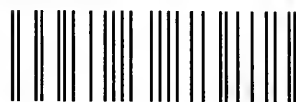








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